DEC 23 1985

New Statesman

BRITAIN'S NUKES Part 2

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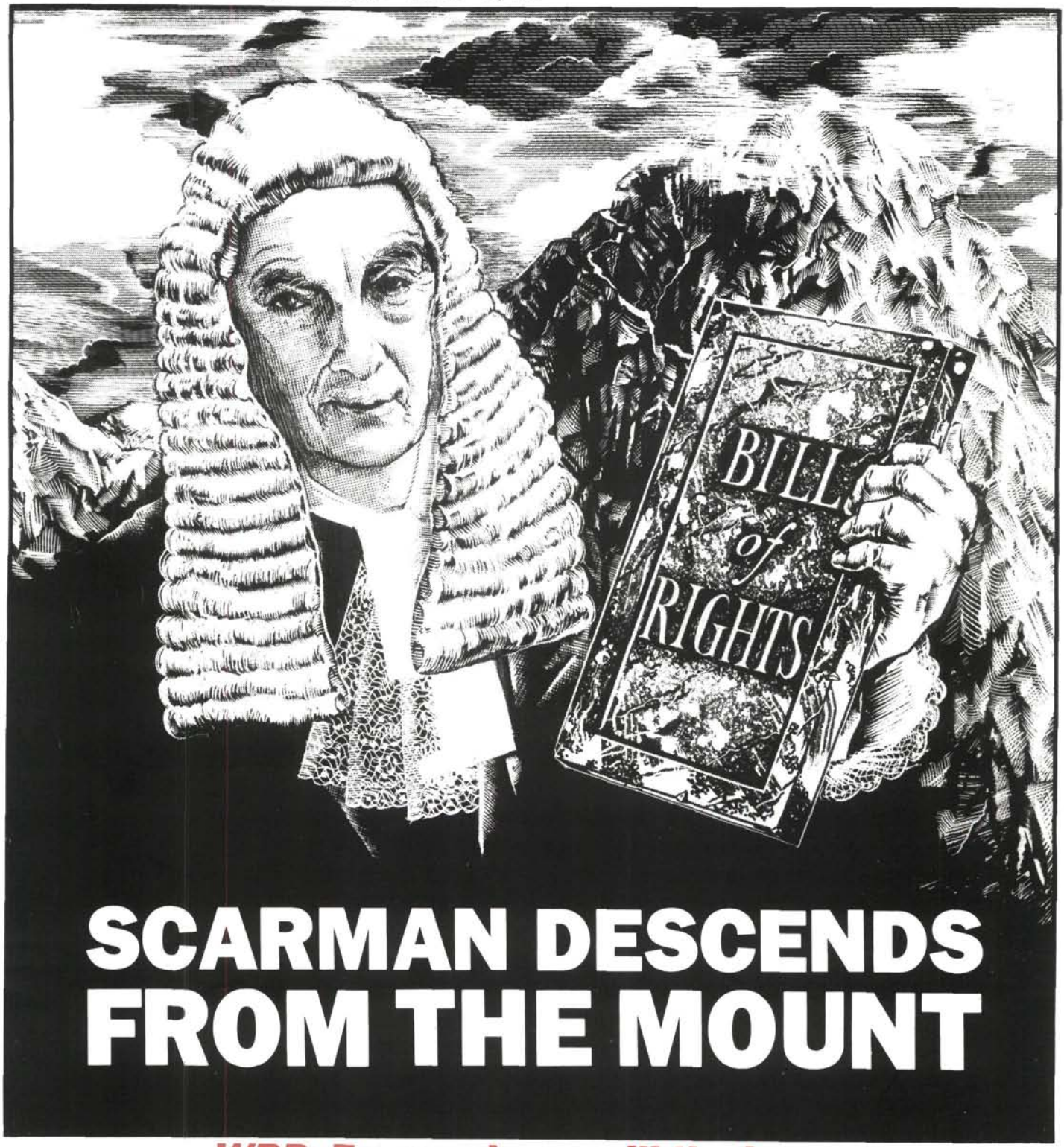

SCARMAN DESCENDS FROM THE MOUNT

WRP: Ex-members spill the beans

MARY HARRON: What fashion's for

JUDY SADGROVE: Campaign for real food

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MISANTHROPIC MUSINGS: THE PRIME OF LIFE

DID YOU KNOW THAT IN 2 WEEKS TIME I WILL BE AT MY SEXUAL PEAK?
35 IS TIME
SO, WHAT HAPPENED?
HE SAID THAT HE DIDN'T FEEL VERY WELL
©JANIS GOODMAN '85

CHESS

HAVING talked of Tal last week, it seems appropriate to pay as much attention to Jan Timman, his rival for the fourth place in the candidates' semi-finals. Now that Miles, Nunn, Short and Hübner are out of contention for this cycle, the Dutch GM embodies the one remaining chance of a western European challenge for the world title. Such a hope may be as forlorn as the search for a white heavyweight, but is at least more respectably motivated.

I found it difficult to characterize Timman's style and wondered why. There is no shortage of material to go on, as he has been on the international scene for two decades. I remember him as a golden-haired youth of fourteen at the Glorney Cup (an under-18 team tournament) in Paris in 1966, so softly featured as to be unboyishly pretty, yet already winning acclaim for the depth and maturity of his game. Inconveniently, he hardly fits the most popular stereotypes of chess style, the tactical striker or the strategical grinder. Well, most masters don't. Those are the ends of the stylistic spectrum, and the bulk of GMs are coloured in less determinate intervening shades.

The best clues to Timman's chess personality are to be found in his extremely impressive book *The Art of Chess Analysis*, published in 1980. Dedicated and meticulous, it bristles with deeply researched variations and stern reproaches for the superficial efforts of other analysts. In spite of his flowing locks and casual dress, Timman's chess strength is solid Dutch virtue. He is the finest specimen of a national style still heavily influenced by Max Euwe.

The Dutch school of chess is very high-minded, its products studious players with a keen aesthetic sense. They want to play properly and conduct the whole game in a harmonious way. They make a research work out of their chess and above all aim to discover the truth about positions. Once they have done that winning the game will just be a pleasant spin-off. I admire the Dutch approach, but it must be admitted that its lack of opportunism is a practical weakness. The Dutch are not adept at swindling, their conviction that they ought to lose from a bad position being too idealistic for their own good.

Timman is certainly an excellent advertisement for the strengths of the Dutch style and as such is very much a player's player. From the point of view of opening theory his games are full of interest — if you know enough to spot where he is innovating.

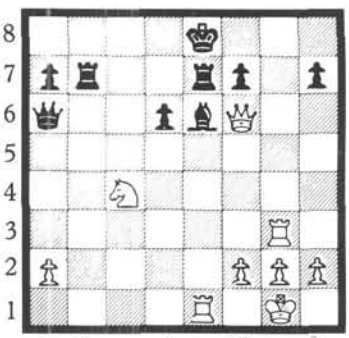
Here is a game in which his Russian opponent never seems to be in contention:

Vaganian-Timman, Tilburg 1983. Torre Attack.
1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 e6 3. Bg5 c5 4. e3 d5 5. c3 Be7 6. Bd3 Nbd7 7. 0-0 b6 8. Ne5 Nxe5 9. dxe5 Nd7 10. Bf4 Bb7 11. c4 Vaganian has been following a scheme of development that led Spassky to grief in one of the games of his 1966 match with Petrosian. I think White ought not to play Ne5 until Black has castled short. As played Black gets an automatic attack in the g- and h-files. **dxc4 12. Bxc4 Qc7 13. Bb5 a6 14. Bxd7+ Qxd7 15. Nd2 g5! 16. Bg3 Rd8 17. Nf3 Qc6 18. Qe2 h5 19. h3 g4 20. hxg4 hxg4 21. Nel Qe4 22. f3 gxf3 23. Nxf3 Qg4 24. Bf4 Rg8 25. Rf2 Rd7 26. Nh2 Qg6 27. Nf3 Qg4 28. Nh2 Qh3 29. Kh1 Bh4** Timman subsequently pointed out that 29 . . . Be4! was stronger, with the nice variation 30. Rgl Bh4 31. Qh5 Rd1! in mind. **30. e4 Qd3 31. Qxd3 Rxd3 32. Re2 Rh8 33. Kg1 Rg8 34. Kf1 Be7 35. Rae1 c4 36. Nf3 Rh8 37. Kf2 b5** White's next-move is a time-pressure blunder in a lousy position. **38. Rd2? Bb4 39. Rxd3 Bxe1+** and White resigned after a few more, superfluous moves.

Vaganian has already qualified for the semi-final matches. Like the little girl in the nursery rhyme, when he is bad, he is horrid.

Problem

White to play and win.



Solution

1. Ne6! and 1-0 in Timman-Tal, Amsterdam 1977 in view of 1 . . . dxe5 2. Rd1 or 1 . . . Kd8 2. Rg8+.

George Botterill

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QUIZ

1) Which poet who has just died edited *The Oxford Book of Satirical Verse*?
2) Which poet who has just died edited *The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*?
3) Who said last week 'We are told we are in the middle of an economic miracle. I sometimes wonder whether government ministers who made that claim live in the same world as the rest of us'?
4) Who said last week 'What appears to me to be the case is that our potential customers don't think we provide a service'?
5) What have Sir Richard O'Brien, David Sheppard, Wilfred Wood and Ron Keating in common?
6) What have Dame Nita Barrow, Malcolm Fraser, Olusegun Obansanjo, Lord Barber and Sardar Swaran Singh in common?
7) Bryan Cowgill has just been appointed deputy chairman of Mirror Group Newspapers. What was his previous job?
8) Sir Tom McCaffrey has just resigned as public relations director of Mirror Group Newspapers. For which prime minister was he once press secretary?

Answers

1) Geoffrey Grigson; 2) Philip Larkin; 3) Ted Heath; 4) Prince Charles; 5)members of the C of E inquiry into inner cities; 6) members of the Commonwealth mission to South Africa; 7) managing director of Thames TV; 8) James Callaghan

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New Statesman

Cover drawing: Will Hill

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NEXT WEEK

PREACHER MAN

Er — sorry — last week we promised MANNING MARABLE on America's Muslim minister Louis Farrakhan but we had to hold it back for one issue. So next week: the preacher who has become the most controversial black American leader since Malcolm X died 20 years ago

OBSCENE POLITICS

With a Churchill to wave the banner and a Tebbit-Whitehouse chorus line the Right is once again trying to 'tighten' the Obscene Publications Act, and TV's the target. JOAN SMITH reports

MUSIC

Jonathan Miller turns his hand to Mozart's *Don Giovanni:* ANDREW CLEMENTS reviews it

HERPES

Overshadowed by the tragedy of AIDS herpes is still a misery for thousands of sufferers: SIMON RAE investigates

New Statesman

Vol 110 No 2854 6 December 1985

This inquiry into Dounreay's a farce

NEXT THURSDAY a pitiful apology for democratic consultation will begin in Thurso town hall, on the northernmost coast of Scotland. The public local inquiry into the nuclear industry's plan to build a new European plutonium fuel reprocessing plant at the nearby Dounreay site will hold its preliminary hearing.

Most of the main environmental groups will make the trek to Thurso this time, but only to explain why they are not intending to return in February, when the inquiry's formal proceedings are due to start. They will argue that the whole process is a farce: there has been nothing like enough time to prepare a proper case, the resources available to each side are grossly unbalanced, and the inquiry's remit is being deliberately restricted to exclude most of the key policy issues.

It is outrageous that a nuclear development with implications far more important than those studied at the Sizewell inquiry for well over two years and at the Windscale inquiry for almost six months should be subject to a public examination that looks unlikely to stretch beyond a couple of months. Britain's first major step into the commercial plutonium economy fuelled by fast reactors (radically different from the existing conventional reactors) is being treated as if it were little more than a planning application for a new publlic convenience.

The Dounreay proposal raises serious and complex questions not only about Britain's long term energy strategy, but also about weapons proliferation, civil liberties and the whole European fast reactor collaborative effort of which it is part. The government argues that local planning inquiries are not the place to assess these kind of national policy issues and merely refers to the relevant statement to the House of Commons by the Energy Secretary, Peter Walker. But even if planning inquiries may not be precisely the ideal vehicle for such debate, at least they are better than nothing.

Where else will the fear that Dounreay could end up fuelling the arms race be analysed? How else can its economic justification, its relevance to energy needs and its social implications be evaluated? How otherwise can the nuclear industry ever expect to overcome the steadily mounting public hostility and distrust it inspires (54 per cent of Scots favour cancelling the Dounreay plan, according to a recent opinion poll)?

Indeed so much is wrong with the way in which the government and the industry have behaved over Dounreay that conspiracy theorists are having a field day. Anti-nuclear groups, local authorities and even the government's own (usually docile) Industrial Pollution Inspectorate have all complained about the paucity of information made available by the applicants, British Nuclear Fuels and the UK Atomic Energy Authority. The location of the port needed to handle plutonium shipments from abroad has been hinted at but not confirmed (in the process infuriating the people of Invergordon on the Cromarty Firth). The concern being expressed by the Norwegian and Danish governments has been effectively ignored and, as the *New Statesman* has previously revealed, Dounreay's management has been less than honest about its military role or the extent of radioactive pollution on its foreshore.

The evidence, in other words, of an organised plot to win planning permission for the proposal quickly and quietly is

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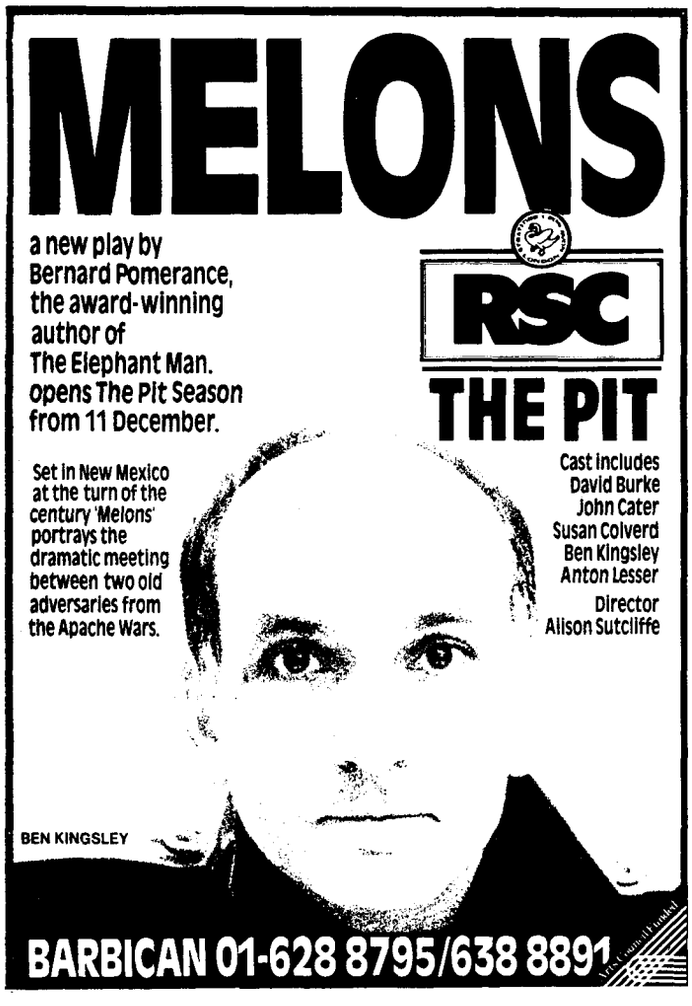
overwhelming. The difficult tactical decision not to give credibility to the inquiry process must be correct. But the consequences, should the plant actually get built, would be disastrous and that debate must not be silenced. □

Can women hack it?

'POST-FEMINISM' is a phrase which sounds a bit like post-modernism — and a lot like post-humous. Nobody seems quite to have nailed it down yet or pinpointed where it's going to. But it would take a staggering degree of optimism and personal privilege to imagine that it salutes a new world of achieved parity between female and male, as the UN Decade for Women (1975-85) draws to its close.

Cui bono — what's in it, and for who? Susan Ardill and Sue O'Sullivan, respectively of *Spare Rib* and *Feminist Review*, had no doubt in these pages two months ago (*NS* 25 October), as they reviewed the changes in magazines for women. For the great newspaper and magazine conglomerates, they wrote, post-feminism is 'an appropriation of the cultural space feminism opened up minus most of the politics' — a phrase — in short — to give an appearance of sociological or philosophical legitimacy to the street-level 'I'm not a feminist, but . . . '

Later this month (15 December in London) a conference on 'Women and the Media' organised by Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom will take further the debate about where 'mid-feminism' — which sounds much more like the needed phrase — has actually got to in the ferocious world of journalism. Not far. Take the dull thud of fact: at end-1985 the largest organisation of journalists in the world, Britain's NUJ, with some 33,000 members, is only 28 per cent composed of women. In contrast even to the US, no major newspaper here is owned by a woman. None has a woman for editor-in-chief.


MELONS
a new play by Bernard Pomerance, the award-winning author of The Elephant Man. opens The Pit Season from 11 December.
RSC
THE PIT
Set in New Mexico at the turn of the century 'Melons' portrays the dramatic meeting between two old adversaries from the Apache Wars.
Cast includes David Burke John Cater Susan Colverd Ben Kingsley Anton Lesser
Director Alison Sutcliffe
BEN KINGSLEY
BARBICAN 01-628 8795/638 8891

We can add our own sliver of research into the mechanics by which the patriarchy keeps up that public front increasingly and deservedly ridiculed as the '*meejah*'. Despite the presence of women on the backroom team which puts out Granada's *What the Papers Say,* only seven women journalists (15 per cent) appeared as presenters during calendar 1984, against 42 men.

What's more, no black woman journalist did *What the Papers Say* during that period, and no 'out' lesbian journalist (nor any black male journalist or 'out' gay male journalist). Next February another London conference on the structural and attitudinal biases of the media, called by the Gays and Broadcasting project, will tackle the occupational and editorial exclusion of 'out' lesbians and gay men. (And *What the Papers Say* will present its 1986 'awards' to journalists selected out of the aforesaid distorted British media opportunities for genuinely various voices).

Where now, will be the question for this December's Women and the Media conference? In the '70s newsrooms were occupied for the right of reply. In the '80s the subliminal message of the 'post-feminism' catchphrase is that the weirdos, the 'Women's Libbers', have exhausted themselves and everyone else, and that the 'moderate' men and women are working out a resulting fair balance of viewpoint in the media. It just ain't so. The facts and figures prove it — and so do the daily sensitivities of all those excluded by race, gender or the direction of their affections from screen, airwave or column inch. □

Lloyd's bell tolls

A MONUMENTAL scandal is slowly beginning to surface in the City. Not Johnson Matthey Bankers, for the JMB scandal (which was started in the *NS* on 21 December, 1984 and with which Brian Sedgemore, MP, has been running ever since) is turning out to be a relatively everyday story of imprudent banking, fraud, and incompetent supervision by the Bank of England, which in addition has continually made Chancellor Lawson look a fool by failing to keep him informed of what was going on.

The monumental scandal is Lloyd's of London, the international insurance market that managed to trade for so long on its mystique — A1 at Lloyd's, the Lutine bell and all the rest — that no one really bothered to ask what was actually going on. And by the Lloyd's scandal we don't mean the past peccadillos of the notorious Goldfinger, nor of Messrs Cameron-Webb and Dixon, who have skipped and are therefore unable to help the fraud squad in their enquiries into the alleged theft of £70 million — a sum that makes the Great Train Robbery look like a kid's outing.

The scandal does not concern the mavericks at Lloyd's. It concerns the establishment of Lloyd's itself — it's chairmen, present and past, its ruling council and its accepted business culture. The routine and accepted practice of senior and respected figures at Lloyd's has for years been of a kind that in any other line of business would be called theft. The most notorious of these practices, the so called baby syndicates, has been belatedly curtailed. It involved those who were supposed to be running insurance syndicates on behalf of outside investors siphoning off the choice business to a little sub-syndicate of cronies.

Similar practices, of course, crop up in other financial sectors, but in those cases they are serious breaches of known house rules. In the case of Lloyd's, everyone has been in on the game, from past chairmen like Sir Peter Green downwards.

In 1983 the Bank of England made an effort to exert its authority and twisted Lloyd's arm into accepting an outside accountant of energy and ability as its first ever executive, with a brief to clean the place up and drag it as a financial institution into the modern world. Mr Ian Hay Davison has fought a running battle with his chairman, Mr Peter Miller, ever since and has now thrown in the towel. Any eventual prosecutions for fraud apart, surely the authorities cannot now simply allow the Masonic clique that runs Lloyd's to sink back into its old ways. □

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Viraj Mendis 'will face death if deported'

VIRAJ MENDIS'S final appeal against deportation to Sri Lanka began on Monday 2 December at Thanet House, London. Taraknath Upali Cooray, a Sri Lankan barrister who has monitored human rights abuses in Sri Lanka, told the appeal hearing that the government there keeps a close watch on oppositional activities abroad. He said that known opponents of the regime were arrested on arrival in the country.

Cooray was himself arrested on his last trip to Sri Lanka and shown photographs of himself which could only have been taken in the UK. Under the Sri Lankan Prevention of Terrorism Act opponents of the regime can be held for 18 months in detention without trial and without anyone being informed of their whereabouts. Cooray said that many detainees had died in police custody.

He related several cases of persecution showing that in Sri Lanka 'subversion' is defined very widely. In one case a man was detained for being in possession of an article advocating a peaceful solution to the Tamil question and a revolutionary magazine — the New Statesman. *Cooray was in no doubt that Viraj Mendis, being both a communist and an open supporter of the Tamil cause, would face worse persecution than the cases he had reported.*

Twenty-one local church groups in Manchester (where Mendis lives) have issued a statement supporting him. They refer to 'considerable repression and persecution' in Sri Lanka and say that deporting Mendis would be a 'an inhumane action'. The GMC ecumenical council have said that the Home Office would be guilty of 'a truly callous and irresponsible act' if the deportation went ahead. Both statements draw attention to Mendis' voluntary work in Britain.

Mendis doesn't deny being in breach of the immigration rules by overstaying. He claims, however, that he would face political persecution and possibly death if returned to Sri Lanka. Rajes Bala, chairperson of the Tamil Refugees' Action Group, has said that 'political activists like Viraj Mendis would put their lives at risk if returned to Sri Lanka'. The hearing will continue in the new year.

Terry O'Halloran

The Guardian

RUDE WORDS SPLIT A CITY – BUT WHO REALLY WROTE THEM?

THE 'GRAFFITI Row' at Poundswick lower school in Wythenshawe, Manchester, is now six months old. As ED GLINERT reports, there are now grounds for questioning whether justice has been done to the suspended pupils. And the dispute has begun to take on a wider political significance

THE DISPUTE started when five pupils admitted taking part in daubing the school walls with graffiti, some of it naming individual teachers. They were suspended by headteacher Keith Halstead, who was backed by the governors. But the Labour-controlled council's education subcommittee overturned the decision after finding the evidence against the five unsubstantiated.

The Poundswick teachers then refused to teach the boys. Some were sent home without pay, and others walked out in sympathy, bringing the school to a halt. The teaching unions have supported their colleagues, but the council still wants the five boys to remain at the school, and claim that the facts vindicate their original position.

Confidential evidence which has now come to light suggests that the headteacher and governors may have acted hastily and unfairly. In a letter to the chair of the governors, Halstead claimed to have 'the names of those responsible', referring to five pupils who he had decided to suspend for two weeks while considering their permanent exclusion. Yet the letter was dated the day *before* senior teachers had finished cross-examining the five. Halstead now claims that the letter was wrongly dated.

The letter also referred to involvement by older former pupils, but none of them was ever publicly accused. And when parents of the five met the headteacher they were shown the *complete* list of graffiti, rather than their sons' specific admissions and were told that their children were the only ones involved. Evidence supplied by Halstead to the governors included a matrix setting the five boys' admissions against the teachers' accusations. This had been drawn up after lengthy investigations which the five boys' parents claim involved the pupils being detained for up to six hours with only minimal breaks and no food, and being questioned by three teachers simultaneously. Although there were 24 separate items of graffiti on Halstead's list, the five have been accused of writing less than half of it — and some is fairly innocuous – and have admitted writing only nine items.

Much of the public feeling behind the teachers has centred on the belief that all five have willingly signed written statements. In fact, only two of the boys ever made statements admitting guilt, and neither signed them. A key point in the dispute concerns the numbers involved. Although Halstead accepts that eighteen pupils and ex-pupils were involved, only five have been suspended, accused, and blamed for disruption to schooling.

Shifting loyalties

Meanwhile, strange political re-alignments have been taking place. Under the banner 'save our standards', anti-strike, anti-trade union groups have rallied round the industrial action of teaching unions. The councillors who took the original decision to reinstate the pupils have suffered abuse and intimidation: their houses have been stoned and windows broken, they have – incredibly – received obscene phone calls, insulting letters, and envelopes containing razor blades.

The dispute has exacerbated a split between the Wythenshawe right-wing Labour group and their supporters, and the new more left-wing administration. The old guard, who lost control of the last year are now denouncing the newcomers as 'extremists'. They in turn are being accused of stirring up public feeling for their own political advantage. It now appears that there are plans by the Right to stand against official Labour Party candidates at next May's council elections under a 'Real Labour/Support the Poundswick Teachers' banner. One Wythenshawe Labour Party member has been helping the parents of the Poundswick pupils not involved in the graffiti to plan High Court action against the council, setting themselves up as the Poundswick Parents Action Group. They have received a £1,000 donation from the Freedom Association.

Many now see the dispute as one about who controls the school — the teachers or the local education authority. The council say they're not questioning the teachers' professionalism, but just want assurances that when pupils are recommended for expulsion 'all evidence is carefully presented by those bodies exercising quasi-judicial functions, including the governors as well as the subcommittee.' The parents of the five feel there has been a vendetta against their sons and that the headteacher has over-reacted because he was named in the graffiti. Hope is now being placed in mediating talks involving the Dean of Manchester. Conciliation through ACAS has already broken down, and should the new talks fail, it would seem that the only solution will be in the courts. ●

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MURDERED SEYCHELLOIS 'HAD US LINKS'

GERARD HOAREAU, the Seychelles opposition leader assassinated in London last Friday, was backed by a right wing US group called the Anti-Communist League, who may have been led to the Seychelles opposition by US ambassador David Fischer, the *NS* has been told. CLAUDIA WRIGHT reports

IF TRUE, it's not the first case of US involvement with the Seychelles opposition. Three years ago we reported on an elaborate plot to overthrown the government of Albert René (*NS* 5 November 1982). It involved South African and US intelligence, the Kenyans, and 'Mad Mike' Hoare, white Africa's clumsiest soldier of fortune. The plan misfired, and the Seychelles security forces were able to capture most of the plotters.

The *NS* has been told by Francesco Pazienza, a former Italian intelligence official with close contacts in the Seychelles government, that ambassador Fischer helped arrange a contact between the Anti-Communist League, headed by retired US army general John Singlaub, and Hoareau, who was paid to attend a League convention in San Diego last year. Ever since Singlaub publicly criticised the Carter Administration's decision to cut the number of US forces under his command in South Korea — which led to his being recalled to Washington and his prompt resignation — he has been the front man for a variety of fanatical anti-communist causes, including the financing of the Contras in Nicaragua.

Bungled arrest

Pazienza says he was asked by President René to assess the security problems facing the government inside and outside the islands. A year ago, however, he believes the US embassy in the Seychelles tipped off the Italian authorities that Pazienza — wanted for alleged involvement in the Banco Ambrosiana fraud — was on the islands, and the Italians sent an Interpol warrant for his arrest to the police commissioner in the Seychelles, James Pillay. Pillay ordered him arrested, but a few hours later President René countermanded the order, Pazienza was freed, and Pillay was put onto dog licence issuing duties. US officials do not deny that they were behind the attempt to nab Pazienza, although their reasons remain unclear.

Fischer returned to Washington in July this year. He tells the *NS* that he has never known or had contact with Hoareau, the Anti-Communist League or Singlaub, and says that the allegation of behind the scenes involvement with the Seychelles opposition is 'absolutely false'. US policy, he says, has been to maintain good relations with the René administration and avoid even the appearance of contacts with his opponents abroad. ●

Melanie Friend

We don't know who the Ian MacGregor lookalike is, but he or she was attending the COPEX exhibition in London last week. COPEX was advertised in the *Police Review* of 8 November as 'a secure exhibition for police, special forces, internal security and intelligence agencies . . . all admittance to be supported by warrant card or other suitable official ID material.' The advertisement didn't give the date or location (in fact it was held at 99 Kensington High Street, 26-27 November) — making it all seem far more interesting than it probably was, and providing an excuse for unbridled paranoia. About 150 people went in, including international contingents. They arrived in taxis, chauffeur-driven cars, and cars with foreign number plates. They definitely didn't like being photographed. One person carried in two camouflaged 'cello cases, and one car brought in equipment under camouflaged covers.

Important test case looms for bedsit tenants

FOUR YEARS AGO this month, eight people died when fire swept through their West London bedsitter homes. About a hundred tenants were crowded into the rabbit warren of rooms in the three connected houses in Clanricarde Gardens.

Now on the anniversary of those deaths, landlord Charalambous Pouyioros is being sued for damages by twelve fire survivors.

The High Court action being brought by the North Kensington Law Centre, who are likely to instruct Lord Gifford, will have important repercussions for thousands of private tenants. If it succeeds it will establish a precedent in proving that landlords are under a 'duty of care' to provide fire protection in rented homes. To date, this has never been tested in court.

The landlord, represented by top insurance solicitors Herbert Smith and Co, will defend himself against the claim that fire precautions and means of escape were inadequate.

While the duties of landlords are being challenged in the courts, there is still a marked reluctance on the part of the government to redefine the duty of local authorities.

No protection

The 1980 Housing Act obliges councils to inspect for fire safety only large houses in excess of 500 square metres. The majority of the country's multi-occupied homes are smaller and there is no duty to inspect these, although councils have the power to do so.

This month also marks another anniversary: it was December last year that the then housing minister Ian Gow announced he would not extend councils' duties to include all houses of bedsits.

It was his response to the results of a government consultation exercise when local authorities and tenants groups overwhelmingly argued in favour of compulsory inspections of all tenanted homes.

Seven hundred people have died in bedsit fires in England and Wales in the past six years. More deaths are inevitable as overcrowding increases and standards decrease in the rapidly diminishing number of private rented homes.

Sue Balding

Crisis in Lothian CRC

LOTHIAN Community Relations Council (CRC) in Edinburgh is facing a major crisis following revelations in the *New Statesman* and elsewhere that its staff are split by a bitter row over allegations of sexual and racial harrassment (*NS* 22 November). A dozen prominent members of local ethnic minority communities have launched a campaign for an independent inquiry into the CRC's affairs.

In letters to the CRC's two main funders, the Commission for Racial Equality and Lothian Regional Council, they say that persistent internal feuding had caused a very high turnover of staff and was damaging the CRC's race relations work. Their complaints, which have been rejected by CRC representatives as exaggerated and misleading, were discussed by senior officials of the Commission in Edinburgh this week.

The man at the centre of the sexual harassment allegations, Lothian's senior community relations officer, Mohammed Akram, has also become embroiled in a public battle with Strathclyde CRC. Its senior official, Maggie Chetty, has accused Akram of pursuing a 'nasty and vindictive campaign' against the senior counsellor for the UK Immigrants' Advisory Service (UKIAS) in Glasgow, Shiona Waldron.

Akram has formally accused Waldron of abusing her position by standing as chairperson of Strathclyde CRC and of not co-operating with other race relations groups in Scotland. She has vehemently denied his allegations and the dispute is currently being investigated by the UKIAS management in London.

After the sexual harassment allegations became public, the executive of Lothian CRC held an emergency meeting and agreed to set up a new ten-person subcommittee to begin a fresh inquiry. The CRC's newly-elected vice-chairperson, John Dickie, said the aim was to settle the matter as soon as possible in order to limit the damage done to race relations work.

Rob Edwards

Who beat up whom?

'A DISTURBING MYSTERY' is how the National Council for Civil Liberties' describes a case that it is investigating.

Just before midnight on Wednesday 30 October, Ed Mason, a social worker employed by Camden Council, was driving north through Borough High Street in south London. He stopped his car when he saw four police vehicles grouped across the road.

A motorcyclist, wearing a full-face helmet, appeared to be under attack from six to eight policemen. Once inert, he was carried into a police transit van.

One of the officers then approached Mason and suggested he disappear. Mason obeyed but was sufficiently concerned to contact NCCL General Secretary, Sarah Spencer, a personal friend.

The NCCL could find no record of the motorcyclist appearing in a local court. Scotland Yard eventually made the not very reassuring suggestion that the police could have been a 'snatch squad' from another force.

If you were that motorcyclist, or you witnessed the incident, the NCCL is very anxious to hear from you.

Ivor Gaber

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November was best month for Tories in two years

THE CONSERVATIVE recovery in the opinion polls has been reflected in November's local council by-election results. The Tories suffered a net loss of only two seats — their best performance for almost two years.

Altogether 34 by-elections took place during November; the gains-and-losses table is as follows:

	Seats defended	Seats lost	Seats gained	Seats held now
Con	14	4	2	12
Lab	12	3	1	10
Lib	2	0	5	7
SDP	1	0	2	3
Others	5	4	1	2

Twenty-two of the contests were three-cornered. In these wards more than 43,000 votes were cast:

Labour	15,374	35.5%
Conservative	14,067	32.5%
Liberal/SDP	13,151	30.4%
Others	710	1.6%

Labour's apparent lead is strongly influenced by the party's success in holding three safe seats on Sheffield City Council; these votes account for almost one-quarter of all votes cast in three-cornered contests during November.

Elsewhere Labour's performance was less good, with the party losing seats to the Alliance in Bridlington and Coventry, and failing to win the Roxbourne ward in Harrow, where Labour came a close second to the Tories in 1982; here the Liberals came from third place to win the seat.

But overall, the Alliance made fewer gains than normal at the expense of the Tories. Adjusting for the pattern of seats fought, the November results broadly confirm the message from the opinion polls, with Labour and the Tories jostling for first place, and the Alliance running third. However, at 30 per cent, Alliance support is — as ever — higher in by-elections than in opinion poll measurements.

Peter Kellner

Council scoreboard

7 November

Chichester DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Easington DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Dundee DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
South Norfolk DC	LIB GAIN (Ind)
Tonbridge & Malling DC	CON GAIN (Ind)
Sheffield City	Lab hold
Sheffield City	Lab hold
Sheffield City	Lab hold
NE Derbyshire DC	Lab hold
Preston DC	Con hold
Amber Valley DC	Con hold
Suffolk Coastal DC	Con hold
Suffolk Coastal DC	Con hold
Kennet DC	Ind hold

14 November

East Yorks DC	SDP GAIN (Lab)
Lliw Valley DC	PC GAIN (Lab)
Lliw Valley DC	Lab hold
Oldham DC	Lab hold
Cumbria CC	Lib hold
Teignbridge DC	Lib hold
Teignbridge DC	Con hold
Staffs CC	Con hold

21 November

Harrow LBC	LIB GAIN (Con)
Coventry City	LIB GAIN (Lab)
Warrington DC	Lab hold
South Staffs DC	Con hold
Wirral DC	Con hold
Suffolk Coastal DC	Con hold

28 November

Aberconwy DC	LAB GAIN (Ind)
Hambleton DC	LIB GAIN (Con)
South Kesteven DC	Lab hold
Blackburn DC	Lab hold
West Dorset DC	SDP hold
Calderdale DC	Con hold

Iodine released at Hinkley B?

THE ISSUE of potassium iodate tablets to 500 workers at Hinkley B power station following the major accident there last Friday — despite the considerable cost in public relations terms — demonstrates the gravity with which the Central Electricity Generating Board views the incident. And it indicates that the Board's main concern is with the possible release of radioactive iodine rather than the 11 tons of carbon dioxide which escaped.

It's the first time ever that the Board has taken this step, which, according to the DHSS circular *Health Service arrangements for dealing with major accidents*, is designed to 'inhibit the take-up of radioactive iodine which when inhaled or ingested concentrates in the thyroid gland'.

The circular continues: 'It may be necessary to introduce restrictions on the distribution of locally produced milk or other foodstuffs out to perhaps 20 kilometres to prevent exposure from these sources'. On the evening of the accident there was a brisk west south-westerly wind which means that such fallout as there may have been would have been carried inland rather than out into the Bristol channel. At the suggestion of the *NS* the local TGWU organiser is arranging for the milk samples to be tested for radioactive iodine.

The accident was the third at the station in a month. The two previous accidents were in reactor 3, which went off-line for 16 days at an estimated cost of £4m. This accident was in reactor 4, which will probably be out of action for much longer and at a greater cost.

Judith Cook

MISCELLANY

Letter to Gorbachev

It may have taken them 68 years, but the Russians do seem to have finally cottoned on to the value of public relations. In evidence we cite the following story, lifted shamelessly from last week's *Asian Times*. Sherry Lynn Bierdrzyki, a 10 year old school girl from Wisconsin, USA, wrote a song about peace, recorded it and sent cassettes to both Reagan and Gorbachev. Gorbachev — clearly influenced by *Letter to Brezhnev* — wrote back enclosing four records of Russian music: an album of Russian folk, two song collections and an example of Soviet rock. As if that wasn't enough, the Soviet embassy in Washington phoned her up twice to say how much Gorbachev had enjoyed her song. So what about Reagan? 'I have never heard a word from him' says Sherry.

Let him go

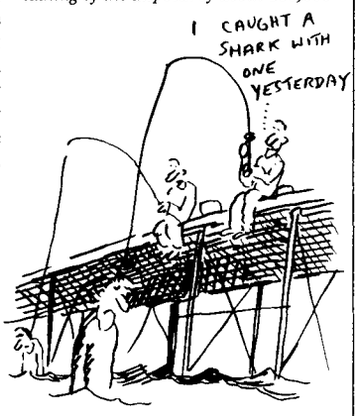
When Judge Michael Argyle sentenced Chelsea supporter Kevin Whitton to life for refusing to move on when asked (NS *15 November), Alistair Burnet on ITN announced the judge's impending resignation this Christmas. Unfortunately, the Lord Chancellor's Department insists that the 70-year-old dispenser of tabloid justice will carry on until 1988. Just to encourage His Honour to take Sir Alistair's advice, let us remind you just how unsuited he is to the work. In 1979, he lost his temper and threw a 14-year-old boy's new bicycle into a river. As it sank, he said: 'If you're quick enough you can catch it.' Worse, his* Who's Who *entry reveals he was last year's Master of the Worshipful Company of Makers of Playing Cards. Perhaps he would put up a better performance in the dock.*

Power and the Gory

No, no — the above is not another *NS*print — it's how messrs *Who's Who* describe one of Graham Greene's better known works. However, we at Miscellany aren't interested in such trivia: our attentions are focussed on the fact that G. Greene, G.O.M. of English letters has established something of a world record in product endorsement. Yes, since 1977 he has been infuriating *NS* writers and readers alike by describing *The Spectator*, a little known small-circulation *magazine*, as 'the most entertaining and best written weekly in the English language.' Emboldened by our own rather stylish refit, we have decided to put Mr Greene's rock-like faith to the test — accordingly we have despatched a tranche of recent copies of our august journal in the direction of his retirement apartment in the South of France, and eagerly await his reply. (We are, of course, referring to Graham Greene the *novelist*.)

2,500 bodies per hour

Life on small Tory islands part 25. On the Isle of Wight, a Lieutenant-Colonel I. M. Appleton, head of the county's emergency planning department, has been visiting local vicars and asking them whether they could lay on mass-burial facilities in the event of nuclear war. The several clergypersons who were less than enthusiastic about the plans were told by the Lt-Col as he stumped off that they were part of the 'loony left mob'. The issue has, as they say, sparked off a lively controversy in the local press. One reader wrote in suggesting that sea-burial might be the best method of body disposal: 'One is talking of the disposal of about 250,000



corpses. This could, however, be more if the event occurred at the height of the holiday season. The piers at Ryde, Sandown, Ventnor and Yarmouth could easily be adapted with casting-off bays, and this would mean about 60,000 bodies per pier, or approximately 2,500 per hour over a 24-hour period.' Miscellany admits to mild doubts about the genuineness of this letter. The author's address is withheld, and there's no person of that name in the Isle of Wight phone directory.

Ronnie's foot in mouth

Our plea for an explanation of why Reagan called the Princess of Wales 'Princess David' (Miscellany 5 November) has been answered. A letter from Aubrey Bramson offers the following unlikely story: 'The President was caught between two conflicting chains of thought. First he was totally bemused as to what the Prince, with his customary panache, meant, when espying the President's tartan jacket and noticing the modish outfit his Princess was wearing exclaimed: "You both look a bit camp". Second, although vaguely aware of the (then) forthcoming summit with Gorbachev, the President was under the impression they were to be held at Camp David. In the event, flushed with bewilderment, the President, as it were, pulled both chains at once.' Hmm. Has anyone got a better suggestion? (And no, Mr Bramson, we will *not* send you a blow-up balloon of our Prime Minister to be used for the purposes you describe.)

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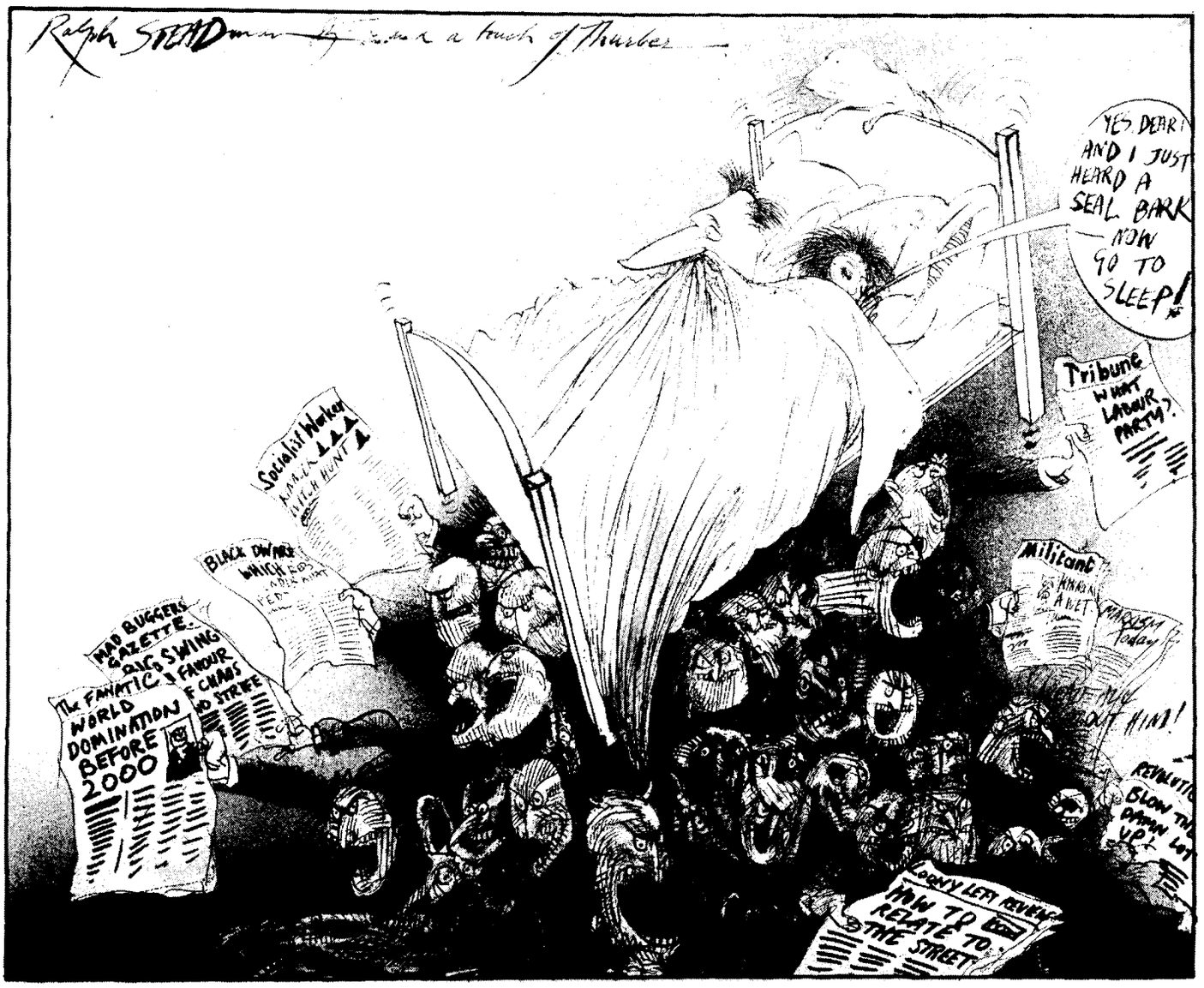
Ralph STEADman — a touch of Thurber
YES DEAR! AND I JUST HEARD A SEAL BARK NOW GO TO SLEEP!
Tribune WHAT LABOUR PARTY?
Militant
MAD BUGGERS GAZETTE
THE FANATICS WORLD DOMINATION BEFORE 2000
Socialist Worker
BLACK DWARF
Today
LOONY LEFT REVIEW HOW TO RELATE TO THE STREET

'As the Decade for Women closes . . .'

As the UN Decade for Women draws to a close, it's worth looking back perhaps to one of the most dynamic actions to take place in connection with it. On 24 October the women of Iceland went on strike for a day. It's hard to imagine it happening in Britain at all, but in Iceland they've done it twice.

The first occasion was on the same day 10 years ago to mark the beginning of the Decade for Women, when the majority of women stopped work and 25 per cent of Reykjavik's inhabitants gathered for the biggest outdoor meeting the capital had ever seen. They proved the point they set out to make that 'when women stop, everything stops'. 'In Iceland', said Sigridur Snaevarr, head of Iceland's delegation to the UN Women's Conference and counsellor at the ministry for foreign affairs, 'nobody escaped the impact, as the grinding wheels of society came to a screeching halt for one day.'

The same was true this year. The strike was planned by a group of 22 women's organisations as one of a series of demonstrations that have taken place on the island in recent months. 'These activities have aimed at making women conspicuous in society', says Sigridur Snaevarr of the 'work-stoppage', the exhibition, the plays, the arts festival, 'and to destroy the notion that women's only activity is to bear children and limit themselves to some very constricted areas of societal activity.'

Despite quite impressive laws on equality, 'women are locked in a vicious circle of working for low wages in low-esteem positions with slim promotion prospects.' Statistics tell us, she adds, that women are registered in 50 professions while men 'busy themselves with 250 possibilities'.

One of the results of women's refusal to work for a day in protest at male privilege in the workplace was, in the words of one newspaper report, that 'groups of disconsolate men crowded into hotels in the early morning after their wives refused to cook breakfast for them'. Male reaction was apparently 'angrier' than on the previous occasion.

Most of the island's telephone switchboards were unstaffed bringing communication to a virtual standstill; government offices, schools and shops were shut; and an air-hostesses' strike left half the country's airliners stranded abroad.

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, Iceland's president since 1980 and the first woman anywhere to be democratically elected as head of state, joined in the protest as best she could. But the 'conservative-liberal' coalition government forced her to sign a bill ordering the air-hostesses back to work by threatening resignations if she continued to maintain her initial refusal. She said she felt 'very sad' about giving in to 'male chauvinism' on a women's day of action especially, but had no choice under the country's constitution.

Although there is much for women to complain about, women in Iceland have come a long way since the Decade for Women began. One third of the board members of the Icelandic Federation of Labour are now women compared to one fifteenth 10 years ago. The participation of women in 'political' or 'feminist' activities has increased enormously.

There are now three MPs who sit in Parliament as feminists, as members of a party founded just two-and-a-half years ago, the Women's Alliance, whose stated aims are 'securing and defending the interests and rights of women and children . . . the Women's Alliance believes that the world badly needs more active participation of women in the decision-making process in order to make it a better place for people to live in'. There are six other women in the Parliament of 60.

The strike of 1975 undoubtedly marked the start of something. The changes engineered by this year's many 'manifestations' by women, as Sigridur Snaevarr calls them, have yet to be assessed.

Caroline Rees

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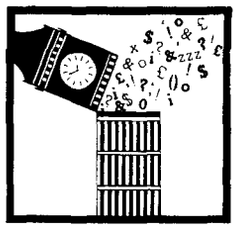

Keep this to yourself, but Owen may have a point

SOMETIMES — not often, mind, but sometimes — I feel sorry for David Owen. He has spent the past week arguing the case for electoral reform. Last Friday Peter Jay interviewed him for *A Week In Politics* about it. Owen said: 'Next week we're going to have a Party Political Broadcast [on proportional representation] . . . John Cleese is going to do it; and I think this is a sign that we're going to take the issue very seriously in the run-up to the general election'.

You can see what he meant, despite the unintended claim that John Cleese and political gravitas are practically synonymous. Owen has decided to remove PR from the curio section of Alliance policies, where it has been gathering dust along with other worthy items, such as the expenditure tax and employee share option schemes, and place it in the shop window.

In particular Owen says that a referendum should be held before PR is introduced. He gives the impression that the referendum idea is something on which he has only recently come to a conclusion and that he and Steel have not really had time yet to hammer out a joint Alliance policy on the subject.

This is disingenuous. For once, Owen is guilty of the rarest of all political crimes. He is *more* consistent than he appears. Having somehow omitted any mention of PR in his hardback edition of *Face the Future*, published early in 1981, his switch from Labour to the SDP coincided with the discovery that Britain's electoral system was the cause of many of the country's ills. But since then, his view has scarcely changed; he was advocating a referendum in the run-up to the 1983 election. So blandishments to regard his speech last Friday to the Peel Society's sixth annual banquet as a novel departure in his thinking should be resisted.

Even so, Owen's argument is a serious one and there is no reason to doubt his assertion that the call for a referendum on PR will be given far greater emphasis over the next two years. If British politics move into a period of hung parliaments, the Alliance's position on PR will be highly significant. It is worth thinking ahead about what might happen.

The first point concerns the *Realpolitik* of the Alliance's bargaining strength. This column has argued from time to time that, if the Alliance holds the balance of power after the next general election, its bargaining strength will be less than it now claims it will be. In essence this is because of the Prime Minister's power of dissolution. If Labour is the largest party, Neil Kinnock will lead a minority government; if this gets voted down he will ask the Queen for a second election and in practice she will be bound to grant him one.

(Even if the Tories are the largest party, Kinnock may still become Prime Minister. If Labour and the Alliance combine to vote down Mrs Thatcher's Queen's Speech, Thatcher will *not* be able to secure a second election — she had called the first, and the constitutional rule-of-thumb is that any Prime Minister is entitled to one dissolution, but not two in quick succession. So Kinnock may end up as Prime Minister even if Labour is the second largest party.)

If Kinnock does form a minority government, he will undertake a handful of reflationary and mildly progressive measures while conducting himself in such a way as to reassure voters that he is a caring, competent and capable Prime Minister. After a few

PETER KELLNER

months he will call a second election and hope that Labour will then win a clear Commons majority. Meanwhile all the Alliance will be able to do is lick their wounds, complain 'we wuz robbed' and hope to do better next time.

IT IS IF there is a *second* hung election result that the battle for PR will take place. Although there are some circumstances in which another short-lived minority government would lead to a third election, it is more likely that pressures would mount for some kind of deal — whether in the form of a coalition or some looser arrangement — to allow a stable government to be created. At the very least, no party would wish to be seen precipitating yet another election.

At this point negotiations over PR would start. The Alliance would point to a run of elections in which the number of Liberal and SDP MPs in Parliament monstrously understated their support in the country. (In 1983, 25 per cent of the United Kingdom vote gave them 3.5 per cent of MPs.) They would also refuse to talk to either of the other parties unless PR was on the agenda.

In these circumstances a referendum might seem a lot more attractive to both the Labour and Conservative parties than it does now. Let us suppose that on the weekend after a second hung election result, Neil Kinnock is sitting in Downing Street considering his tactics, while a post-Thatcher Tory leader has made it clear that he is willing to discuss a referendum on PR with Owen and Steel as part of a wider package.

If Kinnock says 'nothing doing', he risks not only losing office immediately, but standing by impotently watching a change in the electoral system overseen by a Tory-Alliance coalition which might then co-operate under PR to stay in power permanently.

Kinnock's alternative would be to use the one substantial asset he will have — his incumbency at Number 10 — to pre-empt a Tory-Alliance deal and propose a referendum in his own Queen's Speech. The immediate advantage is obvious: such a move should allow a minority Labour government to stay in office and undertake at least some of its economic and social reforms. Kinnock would also earn some public opinion Brownie points for doing all he could to achieve political stability.

THE LONGER-term advantage is less obvious, but still considerable. It is that the referendum may *not* lead to a change in the electoral system. The limited experience Britain has of referenda suggests that (a) when push comes to shove, wavering voters tend to prefer the status quo; and (b) the position of the government matters.

In the build-up to the EEC referendum in 1975, the anti-marketeers were in a majority until the Labour government said it approved the renegotiated terms of British membership and advocated their acceptance. Public opinion quickly switched.

In 1979 the government did little to promote the cause of the Scottish Assembly. With only the SNP strongly favouring a 'yes' vote (and even then saying the Assembly's powers would not go far enough), the anti-devolutionists managed to mount a more broadly-based and effective campaign, warning Scots voters of the dangers of the new-fangled arrangements. MORI's polls charted what happened. Two weeks before polling day, Scots voters divided 64-36 per cent in favour of devolution; one week before they split 60-40; MORI's final poll put the two sides level-pegging, which is how the vote went on the day.

The Scottish (and Welsh) referenda introduced another concept that could be used in a PR referendum. In order to prevent a constitutional change being imposed by a narrow majority on a low turnout, it was decided in advance that not only must the 'yes' vote be larger than the 'no' vote, but that the 'yes' vote must total 40 per cent of the *electorate*. Kinnock could insist on a similar threshold for PR; and if he waived the doctrine of collective cabinet responsibility (as in the 1975 EEC referendum) he could campaign against the single transferable vote.

If that were to happen, I do not believe that STV would command the support of 40 per cent of the electorate: it might not even obtain a simple majority among those voting. But whichever way the referendum vote went, it would be seen to be the people's choice. The argument about electoral systems should then go away — and Kinnock would be able to make his next plans from Downing Street rather than from the Office of the Leader of the Opposition. □

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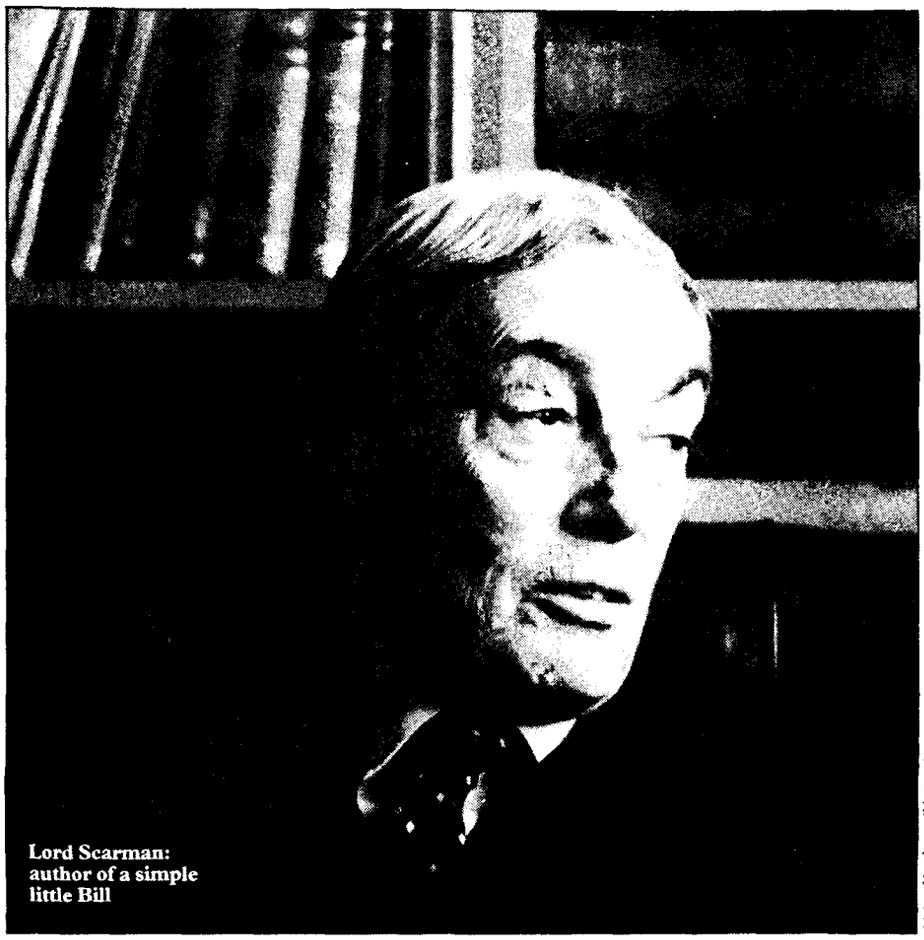

Lord Scarman: author of a simple little Bill

Mike Abrahams/Network

REPATRIATING A BILL OF RIGHTS

The Left mistrust it, but GEOFFREY ROBERTSON argues for the Scarman human rights Bill now before the Lords

LORD BROXBOURNE'S introduction of the 'Scarman' Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms Bill in the House of Lords a few days ago heralds the most significant attempt so far to provide Britain with a Bill of Rights. It has a considerable measure of all-party support, and its opponents make the strangest of bedfellows: Mrs Thatcher and her cabinet, the Whitehall mandarins, and the 'judicial demonology' school of left-wing legal thought. The occasion invites all who are dedicated to civil liberties to support an initiative which would provide at least some direct protection against abuses of power which find no check in the rag-bag collection of common and statute law, judicial precedents and administrative rules which go to make up the law of Britain.

Lord Scarman's proposal is simply to make the European Convention on Human Rights enforceable in British courts. At present, its status is a constitutional absurdity. The Convention is merely a treaty obligation, binding not upon the courts but upon the government, which must pay damages and promise reform whenever the European Court in Strasbourg declares that a particular law or administrative practice has breached the United Kingdom's undertaking to secure the fundamental rights of all its citizens. The Convention as such is no part of British law: it cannot be used as a basis for suing the Home Office, or be raised as a defence against oppressive criminal prosecutions.

In recent years, 'going to Strasbourg' has become an increasingly important journey for the legally impotent. European Court decisions have required the government to stop 'in depth interrogation' and discrimination against homosexuals in Northern Ireland, birching in the Isle of Man and routine caning in schools, unfair aspects of the immigration rules, solitary confinement and interference with prisoners' correspondence, abuse of mental patients, censorship of free speech of the sort which stopped the *Sunday Times* investigation of thalidomide, and so on. At last count, some 80 specific British laws or rules infringing individual liberties have required change or abolition as a result of European Court decisions.

But petitioning the court of last resort in Strasbourg is an expensive and outrageously dilatory process. It takes about six years before the hard-pressed human rights machinery there can produce a final decision, and the Home Office has become adept in buying time by opposing until the bitter end those cases it knows it will lose.

So the proposal to short-circuit the procedure by making the Convention directly enforceable in British courts has an obvious logic. If an administrative practice is in stark conflict with a Convention guarantee, why in conscience permit it to continue for six years when it might be struck down in a matter of months by the High Court? Why the political indignity of Britain condemned once again at the international Bar by foreign judges, for abuses which British judges would have stopped long before, if only they had possessed the power?

But therein lies the rub — 'power' associated with 'judges' is apt to produce a certain knee-jerk response, both in the clubs of Whitehall and the canteens of the LSE. The judiciary is trusted neither on the one hand to understand the requirements of bureaucratic efficiency, nor on the other to sympathise with reforming socialist aspirations of hypothetical Labour governments. Those on the left who respect and applaud the European Court's condemnation of Home Office malpractices nonetheless draw back at the thought of giving British courts the power to abort them.

Their fears are much exaggerated. The Scarman Bill in no way alters the *balance* of power between parliament and the courts. It provides that legislation must not be interpreted as permitting any action which infringes fundamental rights and freedoms, unless parliament has specifically said that human rights considerations shall not apply. Parliament remains sovereign, and the courts are directed to assume that it intends to protect civil rights unless it indicates otherwise. The rights themselves are no so much fundamental as elemental: they do not threaten forseeable socialist policies such as nationalisation and measures for redistribution of income.

The Scarman Bill provides that no minister, bureaucrat or public body shall do any act which infringes the fundamental rights and freedoms set forth in the Convention. Any victim of such an infringement may sue in a British court — for an injunction to stop the practice, and for damages to compensate for any loss it has caused. Undoubtedly, its major beneficiaries will be the victims of administrative practices and procedures which currently vex social security claimants, immigrants, prisoners and other minority groups.

Recently the High Court has stretched 'natural justice' principles of the common law to strike down some of these abuses, but gaps remain which can only be filled by full-blooded argument founded on a Bill of Rights. There is a forensic importance in having such a bedrock as part of domestic law, because it will improve the quality of judicial decision-making. Arguments from first principles are apt to be more logical.

The most dramatic impact of a Bill of Rights in British courtrooms has gone strangely unnoticed

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THE RED TAPE

● The European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court at Strasbourg have nothing to do with the Common Market, and are not to be confused with the European Community's court of justice at Luxembourg, which deals with Community law.

● The Convention was adopted in 1950 by the 16 countries of the Council of Europe, and came into force in 1953. It was inspired by the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The rights it declares include: freedom from slavery or forced labour, liberty and security of person, fair trial, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, peacable assembly and association, and the right to marry and have a family.

● The 'Scarman Bill' is backed by 22 voluntary organisations including Justice, Index on Censorship, and Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants. The assistance of Lord Broxbourne, a former chair of the 1922 Committee, is expected to increase government support.

by academic commentators. No 'public body', defined as 'a body of persons carrying on a service or undertaking of a public nature', may in Lord Scarman's Bill infringe fundamental rights. The jury is pre-eminently such a body, and would have to be reminded of its duty when trying defendants under, say, the Official Secrets Acts or the proposed draconian public order laws.

Clive Ponting and Sarah Tisdall might have argued that their actions were justifiable exercises in free speech under Article 10, and so may future civil servants threatened with prosecution for speaking out. The free speech guarantee of the European Convention is the surest way of destroying the absolutism of Section 2, and a sound basis upon which to build the demand for freedom of information.

The Bill of Rights could be used against other dragnet legislation. CND protestors charged with obstructing the highway could for example argue that this broad offence could not be interpreted to deprive them of the Article 11 right to freedom of peaceful assembly. A gay bookshop, charged with importing 'indecent' literature, would have a new defence: the broad prohibition on 'indecency' could not be stretched to infringe their right under the Convention 'to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers'.

For all this, the Bill of Rights should not be over-promoted as a panacea for present political ills. It is not a stick to beat governments of any complexion, although it would conduce to greater respect for the rights of minorities and provide the basis for challenging the obsessive secrecy and untrammelled discretions in Whitehall. Its most beneficial force will be educative — of lawyers among others, whose professional directions can be influenced by idealism as well as the availability of legal aid. New generations of students would be obliged to come to grips with it as a central part of constitutional law, and not merely as a diverting option or summer-term seminar. Those who complain that a Bill of Rights will only be interpreted by judges overlook the prospect that judicial perception may change as a result. The current generation of High Court judges is much more aware of the European Convention than its predecessors, and not infrequently turns to it for persuasive support.

FOR THE LEFT, the Bill of Rights debate has a certain poignancy. The European Convention was actually drafted by the senior legal advisor at the Home Office and supported by the Attlee government, although the Lord Chancellor, Jowitt, violently opposed British adherence. 'We are not prepared' he fulminated 'to encourage our European friends to jeopardise our whole system of law, which we have laboriously built up over the centuries, in favour of some half-baked scheme to be administered by some unknown court.'

Wilson's Chancellor, Lord Gardiner, was less afraid. In 1965 he supported Britain's grant of the right of individual petition to the European Court — a step which ten years later began to produce our current case-law. By the end of the '60s, most Labour lawyers were convinced of the value of a domestic Bill of Rights, but by the advent of a new Labour government in 1974 the cause seemed hopelessly lost. Deep distrust of the judiciary, engendered by decisions under the Industrial Relations Act in the early '70s, discouraged Labour support for any measure which reposed faith in the courts as protectors of civil liberty.

The judges, however, soon appeared as paragons of liberty beside Labour law officers, who prosecuted pacifists for conspiracy, secretly approved jury-vetting, tried to suppress the Crossman diaries and made a very serious attempt to put Duncan Campbell behind bars on charges carrying up to 30 years imprisonment. A jury acquitted the pacifists, but Lord Denning denounced jury-vetting as unconstitutional, the Lord Chief Justice did not think the sky would fall if Crossman was published, and a High Court judge threw out the spying charges against Duncan Campbell as 'unfair' and 'oppressive'.

The era is conveniently captured in the story of James Malone, an antiques dealer who sued in the High Court when he discovered his telephone was tapped. The Labour government's solicitor general, Peter Archer QC, rushed to defend the lawless and unaccountable basis of state surveillance. The judge took some pains to explain why the inscrutable system of telephone-tapping was a blatant breach of the right to privacy in the European Convention, and regretted that British law afforded no remedy. Malone took his rock-solid case to Strasbourg: the Home Office spun it out for six years before their inevitable defeat, which required them to produce legislation which they hope will comply with the Treaty. So in 1985, we finally have a statute on the subject which would have been in operation in 1979 had the European Convention been incorporated into British law. □

Second Reading of the Scarman Bill is expected on 10 December or early in the new session

MERCENARY? MISFIT?
OR IDEALIST?
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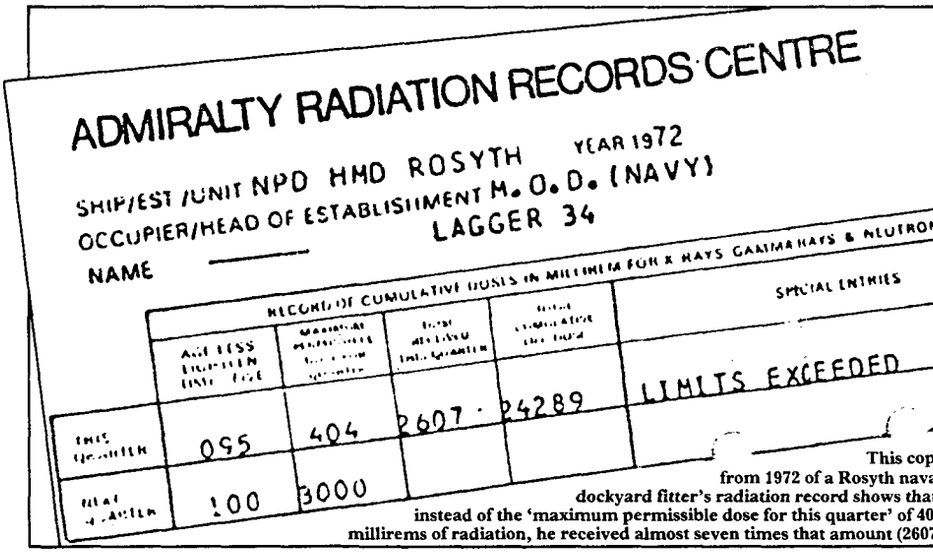
SOME MORE UNTRUTHS FROM MoD

Following the disclosure this week by Yorkshire TV's *First Tuesday* programme of the cancer and leukaemia risks to people living near nuclear weapons manufacturing and servicing areas, DUNCAN CAMPBELL and MIKE BURKE explore official complacency about safety



ADMIRALTY RADIATION RECORDS CENTRE

SHIP/EST /UNIT NPD HMD ROSYTH YEAR 1972
OCCUPIER/HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT M.O.D. (NAVY)
NAME LAGGER 34

RECORD OF CUMULATIVE DOSES IN MILLIREM FOR X RAYS GAMMA RAYS & NEUTRONS

					SPECIAL ENTRIES
	ACCESS DURING THE QUARTER	MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE FOR THE QUARTER			
THIS QUARTER	095	404	2607	24289	LIMITS EXCEEDED
YEAR TO DATE	100	3000			

This copy from 1972 of a Rosyth naval dockyard fitter's radiation record shows that, instead of the 'maximum permissible dose for this quarter' of 404 millirems of radiation, he received almost seven times that amount (2607)

EARLIER THIS AUTUMN, a Gallup opinion poll found that less than 20 per cent of the population trusted either government or the nuclear authorities over safeguarding or disposing of radioactive waste. This public distrust is unlikely to have been diminished by the smug television performance by Defence Minister Lord Trefgarne.

Trefgarne had been advised to reassure TV viewers in exceptionally general terms. As a result, many of his statements can be shown to be palpably untrue.

This week's controversy focused not on civil nuclear power stations, but on installations primarily built to manufacture and maintain Britain's nuclear weapons systems. These include the early Magnox nuclear reactors, not covered by international nuclear inspection arrangements, and located at Calder Hall in Cumbria, adjacent to the Sellafield reprocessing centre, and at Chapelcross, near Dumfries. Both are in effect operating as plutonium factories, working flat out on a special nuclear fuel cycle in order to produce the maximum amount of military weapons-grade plutonium for Trident missile warheads.

At Sellafield itself, a Special Nuclear Materials group, housed in Building B209, recovers weapons-grade plutonium from nuclear fuel rods. The material is collected in Building B267, and then sent, as ingot-like 'billets', to Aldermaston, the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment. There, the billets are machined and then sent on to the final assembly site for British nuclear weapons, the Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory near Reading. Other components reach Burghfield from another nuclear Ordnance factory in Cardiff, which handles uranium and beryllium metals, also used in the cores of nuclear weapons. From a newly built plant at the Chapelcross reactor site comes tritium, a form of hydrogen with the property of 'boosting' the yield of a basic atomic bomb.

Three major naval nuclear sites also discharge radioactivity into the environment. At Faslane, Rosyth and Devonport, liquid radioactive waste from nuclear submarine operations and refitting is discharged directly into the sea.

Lord Trefgarne said on Tuesday that:

> We are not in any way complacent . . . whether in submarines or in research establishments we've never had an accident — which has affected the health of people working there.

Trefgarne's assertion follows a long tradition of similar official claims. In 1980, an MoD phamphlet promoting cruise missiles claimed: 'Nuclear weapons have been stored in this country for many years. There has never been any accident or radiation leakage.' In fact there was a major accident involving the burning and destruction of nuclear weapons at the US base at Lakenheath in July 1956.

This week's claim would be news to colleagues of Mr Douglas Whittaker, who early in December 1957, became the first of many casualties at Aldermaston. A pipe to a smelting furnace broke in front of him and Whittaker was caught in a stream of molten lithium, then being tested for use in hydrogen bombs. Whittaker died in hospital two days later.

Also at Aldermaston, 13 workers have suffered significant plutonium contamination to their lungs, four from plutonium elsewhere. By 1982, four Aldermaston workers had died of cancer. Five widows are now suing the MoD, and more than 61 other workers are contemplating legal action. There have also been five recent cases of cancer at Burghfield and, in 1983, a major accident.

The intense secrecy about operations at Burghfield has undermined health precautions. One woman recently developed a severe allergic face swelling from chemicals used to make styrofoam, the special packing used to hold the critical parts of the bomb's fission core in place. Although the chemical concerned is, in fact, commonly used in the plastics industry, the Ministry of Defence at first asserted that it was a major defence secret and refused to provide a sample to the Royal Berkshire Hospital in Reading. Eventually a sample was taken there under MoD police escort and the woman paid £1,000 in compensation for her suffering, including temporary blindness.

In 1983, an assembly worker accidentally ignited the fuel of a small decoy rocket used in the Chevaline warhead. On this occasion, remarkably, no one was hurt — although the building concerned was considerably damaged by fire. After this incident, all the witnesses were assembled and ordered 'never to breath a word' of what they had seen.

OF ALDERMASTON itself, Trefgarne had this to say:

> We can be confident that what we — what goes on there is done to the best possible [safety] standards

It is not so — and never has been so. The original Aldermaston 'A1' plutonium manufacturing buildings became badly contaminated and were closed in 1978. A new complex, A90, is now under construction at the heart of the plant. Despite its failings, the A1 building was reopened in 1982 under the pressure to produce plutonium for Chevaline.

From these operations about a million gallons a year of plutonium contaminated liquid, processed to extract a sludge, is pumped into the Thames at Pangbourne. We have the official and secret programme specification for the A90 complex, which states bluntly that the currently operating waste treatment plant 'does not comply with current safety standards'. But Lord Trefgarne remained happy:

> I'm told that if you drink a pint of the effluent that goes into those rivers — in radioactivity terms at least — it's no more dangerous than a pint of mineral water purchased over the counter of your local supermarket.

The interviewer, unhappily, did not have a pint of Pangbourne water to offer the minister, nor was he invited to explain why there are a pair of signs at Pangbourne, which ask 'the public . . . not to moor, anchor, or bathe between these signs'.

There are also 61 chimneys discharging air from radioactive areas at Aldermaston. In five of these stacks, a 1978 report revealed, the radiation monitors had been installed the wrong way round and were measuring only the radiation in the open air *outside* the chimney.

In fact, the main weapons activity at Aldermaston — plutonium machining — does not itself require that any radioactive effluent be discharged at all. Trevor Brown, who resigned from heading the Aldermaston industrial chemistry staff in May 1981, says that there is 'no need for any effluent to be put out from Aldermaston'. Such a policy might cost money, but would not in fact threaten Aldermaston's main activities.

THE DEFENCE MINISTER was also questioned on Tuesday about the Rosyth naval dockyard. He affirmed that:

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> We go to endless lengths to ensure that the risks to the workforce and indeed to the people living round is no greater than to anyone else . . .

The risks in or around Rosyth *are* greater than to 'anyone else', because there is more radioactivity in the working and local environments. Both caesium (a nuclear reactor decay product) and cobalt 60 (which accumulates in the water cooling system of submarine reactors) have accumulated on the foreshore near the dockyard.

The Ministry of Defence may not be concerned. But other government departments are. The Scottish Development Department (SDD) has been complaining for at least four years, according to two confidential Navy memoranda obtained in the course of our investigation.

One memorandum, dated May 1982, states that the dockyard general manager had been receiving 'further complaints' from the SDD about the 'radiologically unsatisfactory effluent drain from the Health Physics Laundry'. The Laundry cleans and processes contaminated materials used by workers refurbishing submarine nuclear power reactors, generating 600,000 gallons of radioactive effluent annually.

The documents reveal a growing problem of the buildup of radioactivity in the sediment of the West Tip due to effluent. The drain outlet was — and remains — accidentally buried, as the radiation danger was noticed too late to do anything about it. According to another internal Rosyth memorandum dated January 1982, 'the effluent is being discharged into the West Tip rather than direct to the River Forth *as agreed by the Scottish Development Department,* (our emphasis).

The solution to the problem — a new drainage system — has been on the table since at least 1980. But that improvement project has been 'held in abeyance pending a decision on Trident requirements' at the dockyard. Work could not be stopped to allow safety changes to be made because this would jeopardise the SSBN (nuclear missile submarine) refit. An interim solution of removing the effluent by tanker instead of dumping it was proposed, but was not followed up.

The Defence Ministry is divided about whether this matters. Lord Trefgarne took the view that:

> There is no evidence to suggest these discharges are having any kind of the effects you are describing and I think people can therefore continue to live in the areas around Rosyth in perfect confidence.

This is not the view of the Ministry's official spokesperson at Rosyth, Tony Warner, who told us this week that there 'had been difficulties' with the West Tip and that the pipeline from the Health Physics Laundry had indeed been discharging 'fluids containing low levels of radiation into the West Tip since 1979 . . . it was recognised that this is something that should not be happening'. The 'difficulties' encountered 'were about to be rectified' and 'a new system is being constructed now'.

WORKERS AT ROSYTH may have been interested in another ministerial explanation this week:

> We have very strict criteria for the radiation limits to which workers can be exposed and all of these are religiously adhered to, at Rosyth and elsewhere.

Leaving aside current Conservative views of established religion, submarine fitters and other workers at Rosyth have repeatedly been exposed to excess dosages of radiation during the 1970s. We have obtained a selection of five such quarterly records from the Admiralty Radiation Records Centre, which show that some workers have received over seven times the permitted dose.

Any increase in radiation dose increases the risk of cancer for the person exposed, as a special 1977 study of chromosome damage to the cells of Rosyth submarine fitters showed. Professor John Evans, who carried out the survey, found evidence of a linear relationship between chromosome damage and radiation exposure.

The Independent Broadcasting Authority, on first seeing the Yorkshire TV film ten days ago threatened to ban it. Then the IBA insisted that British Nuclear Fuels and the Minister of Defence should be allowed to 'control' their contributions. YTV was asked to remove Lord Trefgarne's closing words, which were presumably considered inappropriate — given the evidence presented. But for the IBA, Lord Trefgarne would have closed thus:

> I think I can do no more than point to our record in more than 20 years of this kind of activity . . . we will make sure we maintain that record . . .

Quite so. □

Mike Burke works for Yorkshire television.
Additional research: Patrick Forbes and Rob Edwards

TROTS

THE LIFE & TIMES OF COMRADE H

ROBIN BLICK and DAVID CALDWELL recall their days as WRP members and liken the party and its leader to mediaeval millennial movements

'ROBOTS, GLASSY-EYED and mindless, programmed as soldiers in this vast fund-raising army with no goals or ideals except as followers of the half-baked ravings of Moon . . .'*

This description of the 'Moonies', or the Unification Church, is uncannily applicable to the Workers Revolutionary Party, Britain's biggest Trotskyist organisation outside the Labour Party.

The WRP is in a state of turmoil after a volcanic sequence of internecine denunciations, recriminations and expulsions. On 19 October its leader for 30 years, 73-year-old Gerry Healy, was expelled by a group led by his long-time henchmen, brothers Michael and Tony Banda, in a purge that made headlines in the tabloid press. 'Red in the Bed'; 'Randy Red Supremo Grabbed My Wife'; 'Our Sex Nightmares By Red Gerry Girls'.

**Daily Mail* quoted in *The Making of a Moonie.* Eileen Barker, Oxford 1984.

Mary Evans Picture Library

Self-punishment and purification have always been key elements in self-contained cults

But the story of the WRP's present travails isn't just another tabloid 'sex scandal' spiced with a twist of politics. In many respects the WRP shouldn't be treated as a secular political movement but as one in the tradition of the millennial movements of the Early Modern Age, along with contemporary religious cults like the Moonies and the 'People's Temple' of Jim Jones, whose followers committed mass suicide in Guyana.

Like the WRP, these movements were invariably organised around a cult figure. Always charismatic and radiating a distinct 'presence', the cult figure discharged important functions: the enforcement of discipline, supreme arbitration in matters of doctrine and inspiration of the will both to suffer and to conquer.

The WRP exists in tight separation from the real world and provides a vacuum-sealed life, with its own momentum. Much of the average activist's time and energy is devoted to an endless round of fund-raising for various 'monthly funds' and 'emergency appeals'.

When not gathering finance, the party member engages in proselytizing and spreading the revolutionary 'Word' either verbally or through the sale of assorted literature. Lures, in the form of discotheques, social outings, football teams and the promise of political education are held out to would-be recruits, especially 'the youth', with which the WRP has an obsession.

As in cults like the Moonies, none of these activities would be possible without regular and intense sessions of introduction.

Intimidation was at its most suffocating during the summer camps held by the party before it acquired its Education Centre in Derbyshire. These camps were organised in Sussex during the 1960s and, later, on the Blackwater estuary in Essex.

Cordoned off from the outside world with a rope fence, at night the tents and marquees were bathed in floodlight and were heavily guarded by patrols with pick-axe handles and torches, more concerned to prevent escapes than intrusions. States of siege were frequently generated by Healy to raise artificially the level of tension. These circumstances were always linked to some alleged threat from the Devil without: 'police

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surveillance', 'infiltration by fascist agents' and even anticipated 'invasion by Hell's Angels'.

THE CAMPS were punctuated by 'show trials' at which Healy was prosecutor, judge, jury and executioner. One of us was put on trial for 'anti-party acts' along with two other party members early one morning in 1966. On trial with him were leading figures Jack Gale and Bob Shaw, father of Healy's secretary Aileen Jennings.

Shaw in particular was physically attacked by Healy. At one point, Healy kicked him, knocking him backwards onto the ground from the wooden bench on which he was sitting. Shaw simply picked himself up and resumed his seat on the bench to endure further beatings.

The anti-Christ had been unmasked in the camp. Shaw's 'crime' had been to doubt the wisdom of setting up a Young Socialist football league in Scotland. Gale's 'crime' was *lèse-majesté*, originating from a remark by one of his children who noticed that Healy's tent was much larger than anyone else's.

One of the guards present throughout these extraordinary events was central committee member, Cliff Slaughter, who is currently denouncing Healy's alleged physical and sexual abuse of 'comrades'.

The example set by Healy percolated downwards in the party. The other of us, when he 'took off' — WRP parlance for leaving the organisation — was subjected to an 'arrest' by heavies who arrived at his Manchester flat in the early hours of the morning.

He was bundled into a party van and taken to an area committee meeting in Wigan where he was punched and had his head banged against a wall.

WHY AND HOW, then, does such a brutal organisation retain its membership? Partly it's the idea that, in return for these sacrifices, the cult and its leader gave the members understanding of the riddles of history and the means by which the world could be put to rights. The goal, in this instance, was *total* collectivism. The means, *world* revolution. These objectives so informed the rejection of accepted standards of behaviour that their grossest violations were overlooked or denied when committed by the leader himself. This sort of psychological inferno is directly comparable with detailed accounts by ex-Moonies of their experiences.

The Flagellants in 13th century Europe demonstrated religious fervour by inflicting suffering on the body. The movement reached a peak in 1260, the year set by the cult's leaders for the Final Day of Judgement.

Flagellants wore uniforms, practised rituals, sang cult songs and lived a self-contained existence, except for seeking converts. Flagellation therefore performed a dual function: self-punishment and purification. Once endured, it endowed the Flagellant with the right to command the fate of lesser mortals, and ensured a place in Heaven.

IN MEDIEVAL Flagellant sessions, the master of the cult would add his own blows to the self-inflicted ones of his disciples, a practice which, for many WRP members, will recall the spectacle of the organisation's leader berating members in sessions of self-criticism. As one member told us: 'Self-criticism was Healy criticising you and you criticising yourself.'

Another millenarian cult which shared some of the featurs of the WRP was that led by Jan Bockelson of Leyden. In the early 16th century, his supporters seized power in the German city of Munster.

The historian G. R. Elton describes Jan of Leyden as 'a ruthless, egotistical maniac working out his private fantasies and a skilful exploiter of other people's madness. To communism, he added polygamy.' Jan enjoyed his own private harem and had one of his wives publicly beheaded for being 'saucy'.

HEALY'S PSYCHOLOGICAL grip on his party was most oppressive to women members, and it was this that finally broke the party — although serious political rifts had opened up after the failure of the miners' strike and the receding prospects of a 'Workers Revolutionary Government'.

Aileen Jennings, Healy's secretary for 19 years, wrote a letter in July alleging that he had sexually used her and 26 named party members. This was made public by Healy's political opponents in October. One member told the *Sunday Mirror*: 'He would throw his arms around the women and tell them to submit to him.

'If they protested — and some of them did — he would say: "You're doing this for the Party — and I am the Party." Each of them was under the impression they were the only one.' (3 November.)

In the closed world of the WRP, women members were convinced of the need to provide the charismatic leader with the necessaries of daily life, defined in the most reactionary way as including sex.

All millennial visions are based on the notion of impending catastrophe and no less imminent deliverance from it. From the early millenarians, the catastrophe assumed the tangible forms of pestilence, famine and acute social distress, deliverance from which was to be found in the Second Coming of Christ.

In the WRP version, the image is conjured up of the threat of 'military coups', global war, 'fascism' and 'the party being driven into illegality'. The mystical (because it is never defined in precise terms) 'crisis of capitalism' is the article of faith which fuels the frantic efforts of the WRP's members to close the yawning gap between present reality and the visions of its leaders.

Any political party founded on such assumptions will tend to attract individuals who feel a sense of aimlessness, impotence and insecurity. Cataclysmic theories seem to provide ready-made answers. Studies of the Moonies suggest similar considerations lie behind their capacity to retain members.

A statistical analysis by Eileen Barker indicates that lower middle class youngsters — as in the WRP — are the social group most likely to stay in the cult. Also instructive is her finding that members of the Moonies felt a substantial increase in their sense of power over other people and in their ability to change the world.

This is the greatest delusion of all such movements, religious or otherwise, because it is founded on a conformity far more rigid and oppressive than is to be found in the societies against which they supposedly rebel. It changes nothing and discredits those who seek change by other means. □

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MEDIA

The Beeb must look back in anger

PHILLIP WHITEHEAD

CHURCH HOUSE, as a forum for debate, is about as stimulating as a Mogadon cocktail. It may come alive at moments when the princes of the Church of England become incandescent with rage at the thought of ordained women or doubting bishops. But for the Peacock Committee's only exercise in participation last week it felt very dead; not even a conjuring trick with bones.

In the centre, on a platform, sat Lord Grimond and Professor Peacock. A handful of invited speakers joined them in sequence to read out well-known views. Quite how the proponents were chosen is a mystery known only to the Committee's secretary — one Eagle, a functionary whose activities and utterances we would be well advised to follow closely. Six speakers obliged. Five represented interested parties; Peter Jay represented himself. Quite why political parties had bit parts, and other organisations none, is a puzzle. What has P. Jay got that the NUJ haven't, say? The ear of powerful members of the Committee? But he had that anyway.

As an exercise in open debate the day was a waste of time. My memory will be of the two ex-Head Boys of Winchester arguing out the future of our broadcasting system. The tall Jay, fluent to the point of arrogance, pouring out his vision of the 'free' world of electronic publishing, which will be upon us before you can say Bob's your Maxwell, treated some of his questioners like *The Times* sub-editor who was told that he was not one of the three people for whom the Jay articles were written. Milne, a slight figure padded out by an old-fashioned suit read out that curious mix of BBC programme gongs and political grovels which the Secretariat still think is their best case.

The time has come for a certain passion in the defence of a public broadcasting sector not financed by advertising. Milne feels it deeply. He would do well to tear up the kind of script he was handed last Thursday and speak from the heart. Say that there are faults, of size and commission, that the time is past when you can nurse monopolist attitudes in a plural broadcasting world, or be caught out in shabby secretive vetting procedures and censorship without public apology and redress. Say all this, but add: 'As a Corporation we tried'.

A BBC financed by advertising, simply a giant version of Thames Television, would go on making programmes. Many programmes. Mr Michael Grade would be as successful as he is now at reading the runes and picking the tunes. But the training programmes, the commitment to further education, the out-of-town units serving minority interests — would they continue to flourish? They are what gives that disparate collection of BBC personnel — far removed from the big time — its sense of public service. To those who argue that it would survive in an advertising-financed BBC the answer is simple. Why has it never developed in that sector of broadcasting which has for thirty years enjoyed lavish advertising revenue?

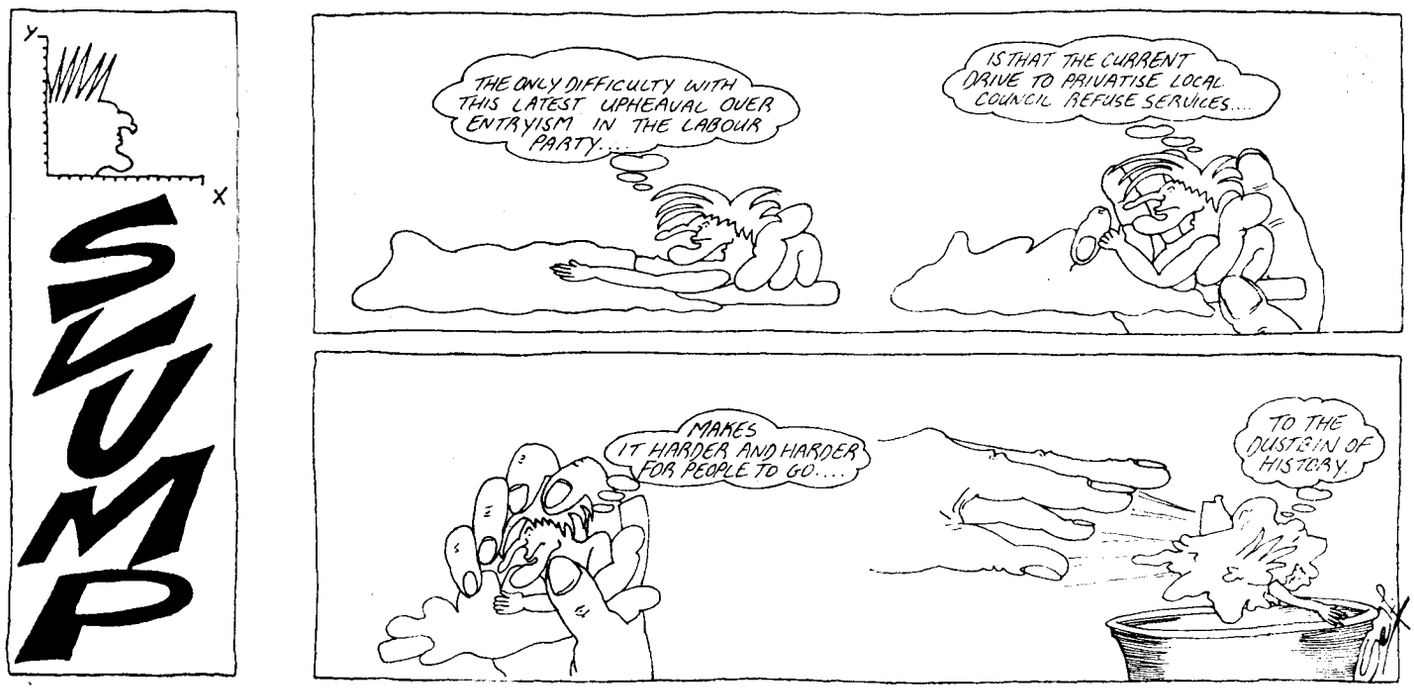
There is more to say. The advertising-financed sector enjoys what independence of commercial pressures it has courtesy of the BBC. The principal competitor for talent is not the principal competitor for cash. If it is right that only an additional 5 per cent of advertising revenue would be generated if there were ads on the BBC, the squeeze would be on the marginal production unit in ITV and ILR. The advertiser who had BBC 1 or Radio 2 to use would need less and spend less on the small fry.

Nor is this displacement all. It becomes increasingly clear that the real challenge to what excellence we have in British broadcasting comes from the skies, with the international satellites that are just over the horizon, soon to be in perpetual orbit. Murdoch and Maxwell have not just the cash and the clout; they have compliant governments at their beck and call.

In these circumstances a strong BBC, nationally financed, is a double asset. Its pretensions to do everything are absurd and Peacock would do well to deflate them. It has distorted some forms of broadcasting which could otherwise have moved into a general pluralism by its awful itch to dominate. The answer however is not to leave it unable to do the things it does best, unless (in an increasingly desperate struggle with the ITV companies) it can raise the advertising revenue to do so. The thing it can do best, now, is to foster excellence, using its powers of purchasing patronage outside as well as inside its own ranks, to make sure that the multinational invaders shortly to appear look like the multicultural muesli they really are.

Advertising won't do it. Sponsorship on the scale required would have sinister overtones. Subscription by de-coder would be a paradise for the artful dodger. The present system is wasteful and regressive. A modest divestment of some functions — a licence collection automatically by household and levied on the new toys which are parasitic upon television as well as the individual receiver, exemptions for the less well-off — these mark the ground on which the BBC could fight its corner with passion rather than complacency.

When will it be done? What we want now is less self-satisfaction, less looking in the mirror of past achievements. The scales of the Peacock enquiry are weighted against it. Some anger would be no bad thing.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DIARY

David Edgar

Well, it is over. For the best part of 15 months I have been involved — considerably more on than off — with the researching, writing and presentation of a play about, for and with the good citizens of Dorchester, the county seat of the equally estimable county of Dorset. The significance of this event for the world has been acknowledged by a gratifyingly large proportion of the critical siblingery (including, naturally, the correspondent of this periodical), many of whom have pointed to the sometimes overwhelming emotional power generated by nearly 200 people celebrating not just who they are and where they live but what they have found it in themselves to achieve.

It must be said that such a surge of collective emotion is not won easily; that number of people does not go through a three month of rehearsals without conflict and strain. For the small core of professionals involved (director, designers, technical staff, me) the project has become a kind of battleground — between the tendency with the Community Arts Movement which puts process before product (and who would regard the imposition of abstract professional standards as elitist) and the faction (in which I number myself), which thinks it dishonest to an audience and patronising to the participants not to strive for the highest possible standards of performance, even if that means (as it inevitably does) that toes will be trodden on and efforts inadequately appreciated. It's a good and important debate — with significance beyond the theatre. Engaging with it has been a happy way to spend much of a year. Even happier, of course, has been the bewildering variety of new relationships I've forged. I shall miss it all hugely.

○

What I won't miss is the travelling. I live in the Midlands, but have had to spend most of the autumn rehearsing in either Dorset or London. I have thus developed a considerably more intimate acquaintance than I cared to with the Ms 1, 3 and 5, as I've commuted between the two rehearsals and my home. It has struck me more than once that the simplest measure would have been to split the difference, move to Reading, and insist they all come and see me.

○

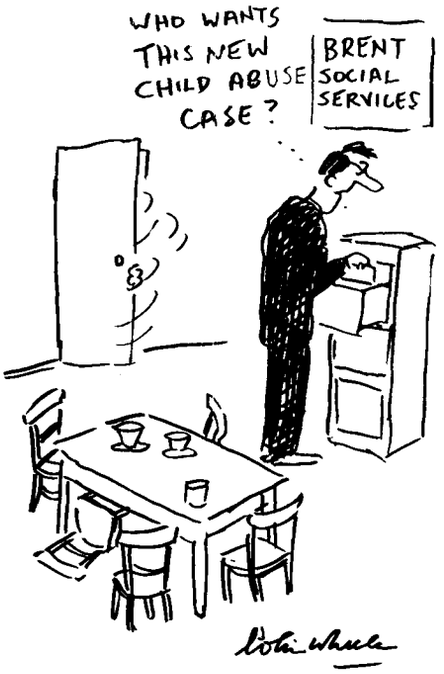
Credit where it is due. With very few exceptions, things have definitely looked up in motorway catering, environmentally and nutritionally: indeed, it is now quite hard to buy a sandwich without getting bits of its constituent ingredients trapped in your teeth. So the question 'why not take the train?' is not completely met by noting British Rail's apparent disapproval of people who wish to travel from the Midlands to the South coast without taking in Waterloo en route (you can do it, but they make you suffer for your presumption). It is also a matter of British Rail catering, which has not looked up at all, and which is a matter of considerable concern to me. Recently, I had cause to call BR to enquire about past fares on a main inter-city service (I was compiling an overdue expenses claim). This information, I was told, was not available on the telephone, and I would have to write to the Area Manager. Now, in fact, this information *was* available on the phone, eventually and expensively, but that is not the point. The point *is* that I have considerable experience of correspondence with the Area Manager of the London Midland Region of British Rail and it does not bode well for a prompt response to my inquiry, or indeed for any response at all. On 19 May 1984, I wrote to this personage on the matter of the banning of second class passengers from the breakfast car on certain early London trains and was told that my complaint had been passed on to the Regional Inter-City Services Manager (Euston) for his reply. By early July this had not arrived, so I wrote again and was told (by the Area Manager) that the RI-CSM(E) would be writing 'as a matter of urgency'. The elasticity of BR's interpretation of the word 'urgency' can be deduced from the fact that I still await my reply.

○

It is also possible to deduce, from the above paragraph, that I've got a bit of a thing about British Rail — and indeed about complaining of and to it. (By the by, I should report that second class passengers are still forbidden breakfast, but now by administrative rather than directly coercive means: no one is actually *denied* breakfast, if there's an unreserved seat; but there never is, and you can't reserve a seat without a first class ticket). A mildly obsessive mentality is something I share with Miss Sara Keays, whose book *A Question of Judgement* consists in large part of the most minute examination of her treatment by press, television, and the colanders of the Office of the Prime Minister. In some ways this presents an unattractive spectacle, but it also reflects — with refreshingly uncosmetic honesty — the nature of Miss Keays's project, which is to wreak revenge, not so much on the hapless Cecil, but rather on herself, for being stupid enough to be taken in by a man so obviously her intellectual and moral inferior. In other words, Miss Keays has been catapulted into one of the great dramatic plots, if not *the* greatest: that of the person taking vengeance, to a point beyond all reason, against their own past mistakes and self-delusions.

○

Returning, briefly, to transport, there was not a little wry amusement in our house at the news that drunken relatives of equally drunk casualty patients were running amok in a Birmingham hospital, sometimes in charge of wheelchairs, causing alarm and distress to the staff. It is of course a matter of great scandal, but it raises the question of how the hospital in question has managed to acquire sufficient wheelchairage to be thus abused. A great friend of ours, who recently suffered severe damage to both legs in a car accident, was returned 'to the community' (in this case, us) last week, not least because her hospital needed the bed for victims of the M6 crash. Her release was nearly prevented, however, by the fact that in the whole of the great city there was apparently no wheelchair permanently available with the leg supports necessary for someone in her condition. The wheelchair she *has* been given (with supports) can be reclaimed at any moment, leaving her immobile. Could not the NHS purchase some more leg supports? Yes, they could, and some are on order, and expected in three months' time. Could (her husband enquired of the manufacturer) he negotiate a private purchase of the said items? Oh, no, said the manufacturer. The NHS must have priority.



ROGER WODDIS

Church Militant

The Church of England's report on the government's inner city policy has been described by an unnamed Cabinet minister as 'pure Marxist theology'

The Church's single function
Is to relieve an itch:
She pours on holy unction
To sanctify the rich.
Beyond suburban borders
Lie acres of despair,
Above the lower orders
The upper class at prayer.

Behold the inner city,
A temple to Our Lord,
Where there is talk of pity
And cash we can't afford.
One holy theme inspires them
Who serve their Master's will:
The simple faith that fires them
Are weapons that can kill.

Bow down before your Maker,
Before your betters kneel,
Give ear to Kenneth Baker
And follow at his heel.
Reject the Marxist clients
Who do the Church such hurt;
Believe in 'self-reliance',
And vomit down your shirt.

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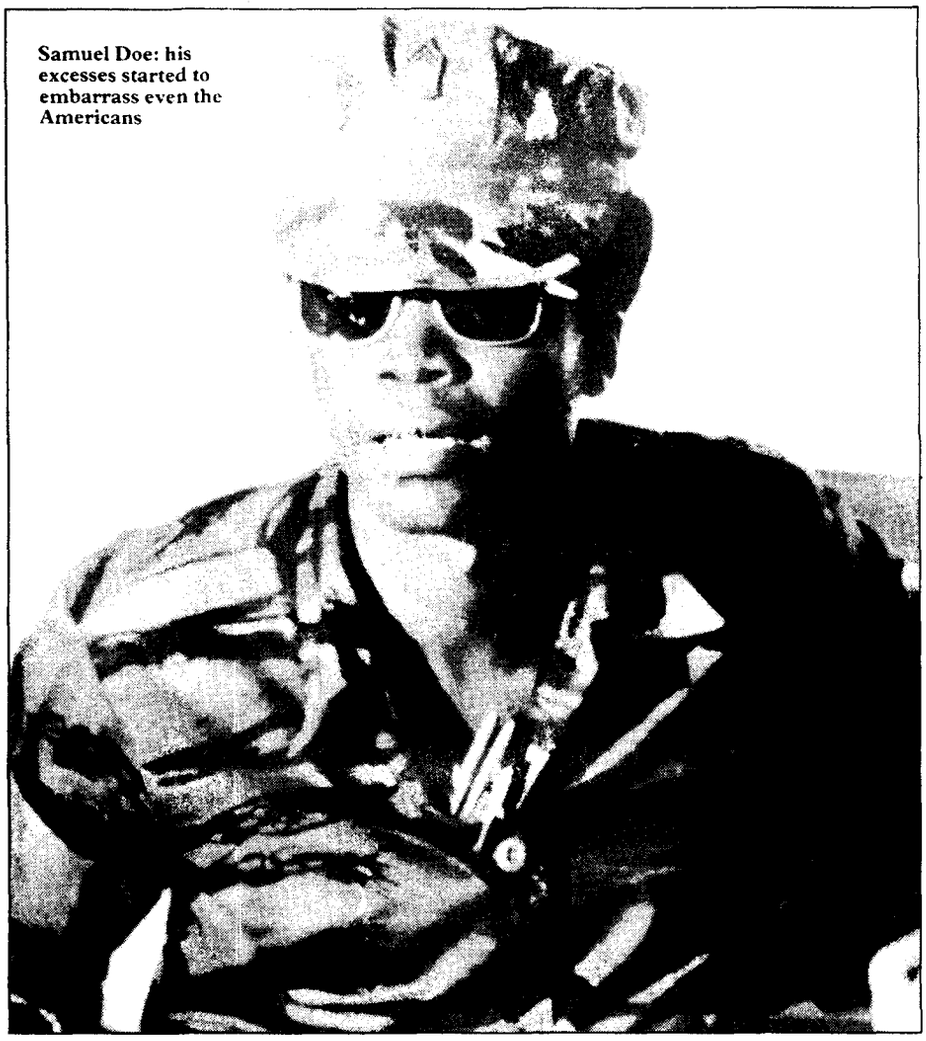

Samuel Doe: his excesses started to embarrass even the Americans

Camera Press

DOE'S A DEAR . . . A REAGAN DEAR

After backing the losers in a bungled coup, the US is hastily patching up relations with Sam Doe, its former puppet. SUZANNE CRONJE reports

SINCE SURVIVING a bungled coup attempt on 12 November, Liberia's president, Samuel Doe, has unleashed a tide of terror against anyone suspected of being in opposition to his brutal regime.

Meanwhile, the United States, which supported the failed plot, is trying hard to patch things up with Doe, their erstwhile puppet. Reagan hastily sent him a telegram expressing delight that he was not injured in the coup attempt and promising full support in the months ahead.

It was a warning from the Israeli intelligence services which saved Doe and, eager to gain a foothold in Africa, the Israelis are now considering Doe's request for urgent civil and military assistance. The Israelis' tipoff notwithstanding, it seems incredible that the coup should have failed, given the Americans' numerous intelligence agents and local allies, and the size of the Liberian army — 6,000 soldiers, most of whom were being used to suppress rebellious tribes inland.

The man who initiated the coup, General Thomas Quiwonkpa, was killed leaving the US embassy in Monrovia, the capital, in a attempt to reach the border. His bullet-riddled and mutilated body has since been put on display by Doe. Quiwonkpa and Doe were once allies who had participated in the killing of President Tolbert in 1980, thus ending the 137-year-old rule by the country's black American elite — liberated slaves who returned to Africa but never really identified with the indigenous population. The overthrow of these Americo-Liberians worried Washington considerably as they had been quite happy to comply with American wishes.

In 1983 after a quarrel with Doe, Quiwonkpa left Liberia for exile in the States. There he proved himself as an anti-communist, military man. He was said to enjoy wide popularity in Liberia, particularly in Nimba in the north, where he came from and where the most important US assets are concentrated. Quiwonkpa thus seemed the natural choice for the Americans when Doe started to use excessive force and violate human rights in putting down all opposition. Washington's fear was that such zeal would provoke unrest in a country in which they had so much invested.

When Doe first took over he flirted with radicalism and Libya. In an early speech, he referred to the need to 'distribute the wealth of our country more equally'. This is as far as it went. A few months later the then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Richard Moose, could report to Congress that the military leaders in Monrovia were 'decidedly not radical'.

THIS WAS A RELIEF. US interests in Liberia, which is in effect an American dependency, go far beyond the legendary Firestone Rubber Company. Apart from private investments with a book value of $350 million but which are worth nearer $1 billion, there are the strategic shipping interests. Seventy-five per cent of US ships are registered in Liberia and enjoy the advantage of being able to sail into ports where the American flag may not be welcome, as was the case during the Arab oil embargo which followed the last Middle East war. Foreign-flag ships can legally ignore their own government's safety and industrial legislation, and the economic advantage of this is immense. After Doe overthrew Tolbert and his True Whigs party in 1980, a spokesman for the shipowners said publicly that any move by the new leaders to interfere with the flags of convenience system would ensure their speedy removal from office as a result of American intervention.

Liberia also houses an OMEGA navigation station — one of seven in a global network essential for military as well as civilian traffic. Even more hush-hush is the American telecommunications relay station in Liberia which transmits the diplomatic traffic between Washington and its embassies throughout Africa. Since 1979, when the pro-American government in Iran was overthrown, Monrovia has been the largest CIA centre in Africa and the Middle East. Besides, the US enjoys unhindered access to Robertsfield Air Base, built by the Americans in the first place, although it now also serves as Monrovia's airport. There is a powerful Voice of America transmitter which broadcasts to the Middle East and southwestern USSR.

In view of Liberia's proximity to Libya, the 'stability' of the Monrovia government is of considerable concern to Washington. Moose's initial impression of Doe was that he was safe for the moment, but that he and his followers were a rough bunch — 'These soldiers come from the rural areas of Liberia. Most have no experience outside the military and none outside Liberia'. They had brutally executed 13 members of the True Whig government in one go, but Doe had promised him to stop this practice. 'We have stressed to the Liberians that the protection of human rights is a crucial factor'. Moose recommended stepping up military and other aid because they had told him in Monrovia that this

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would help them beat off a counter-coup. 'Once the armed forces are better equipped, they will move ahead on prisoner releases'.

ENORMOUS AMOUNTS of money went from Washington to Monrovia to build new military barracks, on the understanding that Doe and his colleagues would retire to this palatial accommodation sooner or later. This year a further $9 million was given as a grant for the building. But Doe had no intention whatsoever of relinquishing power. In 1982, when he visited Washington, he made this clear: there could be elections in Liberia, but he would decide who would be elected. To get US support for his own candidacy he restored diplomatic links with Israel in 1983: the Israelis had promised him to plead his case in Washington. Doe's rivals, including Quiwonkpa, though not radical, seemed more likely to follow the OAU line on non-recognition of Israel. Therefore, the Israelis threw their whole weight behind Doe.

Israel agreed to supply Liberia with military equipment, to train the Presidential Guard and to furnish intelligence on external threats as well as internal subversion. Doe made himself more acceptable to American opinion by putting the whole electoral process under the stalwart leadership of Mr E. Harmon, of the True Whig Party, who became chairman of the all-powerful Special Electoral Commission, the other members of which had similar pre-Doe credentials.

Some Americans were reassured, but others were still seriously perturbed by the electoral arrangements in Liberia. Doe had already arrested and executed several of his old colleagues. Now, if any of his political rivals showed signs of popularity, Harmon refused to register their parties in accordance with a new law banning ideologies 'repugnant to our intrinsic value as people'. This led to the exclusion of the country's most respected political figure, Dr Amos Sawyer, whose chief crime was that he had turned down Doe's offer of the vice-presidential ticket. His arrest led to country-wide demonstrations, and on 22 August 1984, the army opened fire on students at Monrovia University, killing up to 50.

It was this incident which started off American preparations to replace Doe. Doe's visits to the US had been put off twice by Washington, and Doe rebuffed American attempts to speed the elections as interference. Congress was moved to make $90 million aid for Liberia conditional on free and fair elections. Relations deteriorated further when Doe refused to receive an emissary from the State Department who had been sent to protest against the 10-year sentence passed on an Americo-Liberian politician, Mrs Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a former minister. Her crime had been to deliver a speech in America on her country's prospects, in which she said:

> I look at the many citizens walking the streets of Monrovia or sitting quietly in an unbusy office ('in low profile', they call it) and then I look at the many idiots in whose hands our nation's fate has been placed, and I sit and shake at the unnecessary and tremendous cost which we pay under the guise of righting the wrongs of the past.

After massive pressure from the US Congress, she was released, but following the bungled coup she has been rearrested; one of the many to pay the price of Liberia's dependence on foreign powers. □

BLACK SOUTH AFRICA

SHAPE OF THE UNION

CHARLES GRANT on a soaring new black voice

THE MOST POWERFUL black trade union organisation ever seen in South Africa held its inaugural meeting in Durban last weekend. With half a million members, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) includes most of the independent unions which have sprung up since the late 1970s. The background to its formation is one of hard talking between the unions to hammer out its political direction. The issues at stake included affiliation to political parties, whether it would confine itself to workplace bargaining and whether it would attempt to reorganise the shape of black unions.

COSATU's political impact will be considerable, in both strengthening the opposition forces and shifting their emphasis. 'The new federation could move the opposition groupings leftwards,' said David Lewis, national organiser of the General Workers Union. By giving focus to specifically working class aspirations, COSATU may force the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the African National Congress (ANC) — which some union leaders regard as too middle-class — to become more worker-orientated.

COSATU is unlikely to affiliate directly to any political group such as the UDF; it represents too diverse a political and racial spectrum. 'COSATU contains supporters of Azapo, Inkatha and the UDF, together with non-political people, socialists, coloureds, Indians and people from all regions,' said Lewis. 'To support just one group or party would risk alienating members.'

But COSATU showed at its first meeting that it will take political stances: it threatened a campaign of civil disobedience and pass book burning unless the government repealed the pass laws within six months. 'COSATU will work with other bodies in campaigning on issues like the consumer boycott, rent increases, and getting the defence forces out of the townships,' said Lydia Kompe, Transvaal secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

THE LAUNCHING OF COSATU has been marred by the absence of two important groups of unions, which together represent about 150,000 workers. The black consciousness Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions would not accept one of COSATU's five founding principles, that it be committed to 'non-racialism'. The Azanian Confederation wanted to substitute 'anti-racialism', so that some of its constituents could remain black-only unions.

The Council of Unions of South Africa also shunned COSATU: some of its affiliates rejected its non-racialism principle, while others objected to another founding principle, 'one union, one industry'. COSATU is committed to amalgamating the many general unions that have joined it, and carving out a series of more effective single-industry unions.

Most of the 34 unions in COSATU have never affiliated to the UDF, because of the diverse political views of their members, because of the fear of persecution, or because they regard it as insufficiently socialist. Those that have include the General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU). Its president, Sampson Ndovu, said, 'Workers can't wage struggles on their own without help from other organisations; their problems don't end at the factory gates — what's happening in the townships affects them'. Ndovu wanted collaboration between trade unions and UDF bodies: 'During a strike, the UDF can ask students', womens' and civic organisations to help locked out workers or to boycott products.' During September's strike by black miners, UDF strike committees collected money for strikers' families.

RECESSION AND repression are the two greatest problems confronting COSATU. With black unemployment now estimated at 25 per cent, the industrial recession has cut into the unions' membership base. The General and Allied Workers, for example, claims 45,000 members, but admits that those paying their one rand a month membership dues have recently fallen from 18,000 to 12,000. It depends on help from churches and foreign donations to maintain its 14 full-time workers. Despite the fact that economic sanctions would aggravate the recession, all the black unions support them.

Repression has hit union organisation. The leadership of the South African and Allied Workers Union is on trial. Four leaders of the General and Allied Workers are in detention. But the strength of the unions is that they are built on an active grassroots. Their organisations are extremely democratic and do not depend on a powerful central secretariat. Branches of the General and Allied Workers for example, can strike or not strike against the wishes of national leadership. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) balloted its members before calling its strike last September.

The state's attitude towards the new unions is ambivalent. In theory, it has tolerated them since it adopted the recommendations of the Wiehahn Report in 1979. This said that black unions should be legalized to stop them becoming too political. But since the government declared a state of emergency last July, it has frequently arrested union activists, and it appears to have chosen a much tougher line on industrial disputes. On 17 November, the government sacked 1,800 striking student nurses and auxiliary workers at the Baragwanath hospital in Soweto — and replaced them with troops.

One state institution, however, has shown signs of political neutrality. The Industrial Court recently ruled that the mining company Gencor had been wrong to sack and evict 900 miners during the strike in September. Although the miners lost the strike against Gencor, Anglovaal and Goldfields, the court ruling has been a triumph for NUM, boosting its membership in the mines of those companies, where it was previously weak. 'The ruling may prove significant for all trade unions,' said NUM official Marcel Golding. 'It'll now be difficult for any company to fire workers engaged in a legal strike.'

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The NUM is the strongest and best organized union in COSATU, with 230,000 members out of 600,000 miners in South Africa. An indication of its industrial muscle is that last August, rather than face a strike, Anglo-American conceded wage increases of 22 per cent. But outside the mines, and the textile, metal, car, paper and food industries — which are crucial in terms of challenging the economy — the black unions remain weak. They have little organisation in the railways, in state industries, on the farms or among domestics.

Probably only about 10 per cent of the black workforce is unionised, but as state repression generates greater political consciousness among black workers, an increasing number are joining unions. With the UDF leadership virtually all in detention or underground, the unions are now the best organised opposition movement in the country. It is through them as well as on the streets that black anger will be expressed. □

I SPY . . .

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

Despite determined attempts on both sides to contain the damage, the Israeli spy case is developing into a major embarrassment for the Americans, reports CLAUDIA WRIGHT

Washington

EARLY IN NOVEMBER a simple ceremony took place in Washington. John Lehman, the Secretary of the Navy, was guest of honour at a reception organised by the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA). Shoshana Bryen, JINSA's president, embraced Lehman and presented him with an award marking JINSA's appreciation of the US Navy's interception on 10 October of the Egyptian aircraft carrying the hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship.

Nothing too remarkable about that. Before he became Navy Secretary, Lehman was well-known in Israeli military circles, sat on the board of a Philadelphia think-tank run by American supporters of Israel and operated a highly profitable defence consulting company with business ties to the Israeli arms industry. Lehman's friends and associates have included a number of JINSA members, who have also worked at the Pentagon since 1981 — they include Stephen Bryen, founder of JINSA and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, and Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense and one-time business partner and real estate investor with Lehman.

The links between Israel's military establishment and Pentagon officials like Lehman, Bryen and Perle, have come under scrutiny in several cases of alleged conflict of interest and espionage in the past. But until the arrest a fortnight ago of Jonathan Jay Pollard, a US Navy intelligence analyst accused of spying for Israel, none of the investigations carried out by the FBI resulted in a formal prosecution.

Israel, its friends in Congress, and the US media are attempting to portray Pollard as an isolated case of a rogue spying operation that senior Israeli officials knew nothing about and did not authorise. They are trying to make Pollard and a handful of middle-level intelligence operatives in the Israeli government the scapegoats in an affair for which the government in Jerusalem has apologised. But a number of present and former CIA officials believe Pollard's recruitment runs too far back in time to be tied solely to the small scientific intelligence unit, identified within the Israeli defence ministry by the Israeli press. They have evidence suggesting that the Mossad, the principal Israeli espionage agency, was involved in arranging a trade with Pakistani officials of US intelligence gathered by Pollard; the Israelis provided material on India in return for Pakistani information on Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states.

US officials also suggest that another member of Pollard's family preceded him in a case of passing classified US information to Israel and lost a US government contract as a result. The point for US officials is, as William Colby, the former director of the CIA, suggested in a TV interview last week — 'whether there is another one, whether there is another Pollard'. Colby and the FBI believe the answer is yes.

NS sources within the US government confirm that in recent months the FBI has recommended prosecution of at least two Pentagon officials, apart from Pollard, for espionage for Israel; one has been identified as specialising on Ethiopian affairs. FBI sources have also said they have been investigating a retired US military intelligence officer on suspicion of illegal arms dealings with the Israelis. Pentagon sources say that a foreign-born consultant to the Pentagon was recently questioned by the Defense Investigative Service about unauthorised disclosures to a third party (presumed to be Israel). His consulting contract was terminated; he was a specialist on Soviet forces and Afghanistan.

FBI INVESTIGATION of senior officials like Perle and Bryen has been inconclusive. Perle was investigated in 1970 when an FBI telephone tap on the Israeli embassy turned up a conversation in which Perle, then an assistant to Senator Henry Jackson, discussed with an Israeli official classified information that had been given to him by a member of the National Security Council (NSC) staff. The FBI suspected Helmut Sonnenfeldt, a member of the NSC staff whose sympathy for Israel was such that another staff member at the time called him a 'double agent'. No official action resulted against either Perle or Sonnenfeldt.

Eleven years later, after Perle was nominated for his present job at the Pentagon, CIA sources say that Perle claimed to have been born in New York City on 16 September 1941. A check with the New York authorities has turned up no such record; CIA agents believe Perle is concealing his birth and family connections in the Soviet Union.

NS has learned that Perle's wife, Leslie Barr, a lawyer and a senior official of the US customs service, may have attempted early this year to prevent the exposure of illegal activities by a friend. The source of the information is Francesco Pazienza, once an Italian intelligence official and aide to the former head of SISMI, Italy's military intelligence branch. Pazienza is currently in a New York jail awaiting the outcome of proceedings on a request for extradition to Italy where he is accused of extortion and bank fraud.

The target of Pazienza's accusations is Michael Ledeen; some of the allegations appeared some time ago in the Italian press and more recently in the *Wall Street Journal*. According to Pazienza, Ledeen sought his help in gathering evidence during the 1980 presidential election campaign that would link President Carter's brother Billy to Libyan leader Muammar Gadafy, damaging Carter's re-election support in the American Jewish community, and helping Ronald Reagan. Pazienza also claims Ledeen has received payoffs from Italian and Spanish sources for political favours from Reagan Administration officials with whom Ledeen also works as a consultant.

Ledeen has several ties to the Perle network. His wife Barbara is an assistant in Stephen Bryen's Pentagon office — she was hired in 1983 without previous experience in military or defence technology matters after working for a Washington magazine that reports archaeological discoveries in Israel. Ledeen was appointed by Shoshana Bryen to JINSA's board of directors.

Pazienza believes he was arrested in New York in March after US customs agents, for whom he had been acting as an informant outside the US, broke an earlier promise not to hand him over to the Italian authorities.

Perle, Barr, Ledeen and his wife refuse to answer questions on the subject. Ledeen has publicly acknowledged receiving some of the payments Pazienza has alleged, but disputes Pazienza's interpretation of their amount and legality.

There is growing concern among US Jews who are active in Congress and the media that the Pollard case will lead to accusations of dual loyalty. But they concede that the line between sympathisers, informants and agents, between legal and illegal activities is a very fine one under US law — easy to step over, but difficult to prove in court. □

This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed. (On postcards please).

□ If the Government devoted a thousandth part of the money it wastes on 'jobs' to the business of teaching people how to play bridge, as Culbertson taught it, we might yet achieve the Disraelian dream of one nation. — *Sunday Telegraph* (Mr J. T. Hart)

□ Each morning their anonymous guard has not only announced the latest moves in the Reagan/Gorbachev talks but has also inserted good humoured remarks like 'shake hands with a Russian today or if you can't then smile at a British Rail employee'. — *Daily Telegraph* (George Moor)

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LETTERS

Abortion: we can't agree

Peter Lloyd, Cardiff

Alison Davis has put forward two arguments against the abortion of abnormal foetuses (*NS* 22 November). In order to answer her arguments separately, I shall try to paraphrase them.

Her first argument seems to be this: 'Foetuses are alive; they therefore have a right to continue living, and no abortions should be induced.' As Ms Davis says, 'It is a biological fact that life begins at conception'. This simply is not true. By any scientific criteria, sperm cells and unfertilised ova are just as much alive as fertilised ova are. If Davis's rule were to be applied consistently, it would entail that menstruation is homicide, since it kills living human egg-cells.

Her second argument seems to be this: 'Allowing foetal abnormality as a legitimate ground for abortion would imply that handicapped people are inferior to other people. Since that is wrong, foetal abnormality should not be a legal ground for abortion.' The implication she alleges is not real. What the foetal-abnormality ground actually implies is that most people would prefer not to be born with deformities or diseases.

Against this, some people of Davis's persuasion argue that if society's bias against the handicapped could be removed, then being handicapped would no longer be undesirable. What wishful thinking that is! Although handicapped people face many problems that are due to an uncaring attitude in society at large, the handicap itself is always unwanted by the person it afflicts. This is most obviously true in congenital diseases that lead to premature death.

The suggestion, by Ms Davis and others, that the pro-choice view on abortion is biased against handicapped people is as unfounded as any of the mass of propaganda put out by groups opposed to a free choice on abortion.

Sue Williams, London SE27

As a feminist I find Julia South's articles deeply offensive. Many of us on the Left oppose abortion because it is oppressive — it discriminates, the killing of unborn handicapped children being one of the most obvious cases.

What is Julia South's position on the killing of unborn girls, purely because they are female (as shown on Channel 4, *Asian Eye*)? Is this not the greatest attack on female equality — being denied the right to life solely because of your sex? And if it is wrong to kill your foetus just because she is a baby girl, what does this entail about the rights of this girl? These questions must be answered by pro-abortion feminists.

Diane Munday, British Pregnancy Advisory Service

As somebody concerned for the past two decades with women's rights to control their fertility I want to congratulate Julia South on bringing out into the open aspects of the anti-abortion pro-choice debate which are often left hidden. However, she wrote that the new voluntary limit of 24 weeks agreed for the eight abortion clinics currently 'approved' to perform abortions after the 20th week will mean 'abortions will in fact not be performed after 20 weeks, in case there has been a mistake'.

This is not so: I was one of the representatives of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (whose Wistons Clinic in Brighton performs late abortions) at the DHSS meeting in July and this was something I asked about. Clearly, if the law is changed to give a 24 week cut-off point, anybody who for any reason exceeds that limit is breaking the law and is liable to be prosecuted (as with the current 28 week absolute legal limit). So people tend voluntarily to operate a lower limit to avoid inadvertently committing an offence.

However, with an 'agreement' about 24 weeks and the law still at 28, effecting sanctions against those breaking the 24 week limit will lie with the DHSS and be within its discretion. At the July meeting an undertaking was given that no doctor or clinic would be disciplined and no sanctions would be applied if 'acting in good faith' there was an inadvertent overstepping of 24 weeks.

Therefore as long as genuine steps are taken to obtain evidence of length of gestation, and the evidence is interpreted properly, it will be acceptable to terminate pregnancies of 24 weeks duration.

It is also time somebody took on and answered Alison Davis's emotive and often repeated appeal as to why 'it is legitimate to kill an unborn baby on the grounds that it would otherwise grow up to be like me'. Up to now we have all been too 'nice' to reply.

The blunt answer, Ms Davis, is that the fact that *you* are handicapped and happy is no reason for forcing handicap on others: because you are pleased to have been born is no guarantee that others will also be pleased to exist: the fact that you have had opportunities to lead a full life does not mean that all handicapped people have the chance or the ability to obtain university degrees.

Disabled Women for Life would be doing the already born disabled a useful service if they campaigned for more and better facilities: it is no service to anybody to sit back and complacently advocate that more should be born.

Leonora Lloyd, National Abortion Campaign, Wesley House, 70 Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AX

In the first article on abortion you mis-quoted our membership — while it is indeed 350, this is a 50 per cent increase since the same time last year. In the second article, the address was one which is 18 months out of date (for correct address see above).

The articles gave lots of details about the anti-abortionists, both in terms of their propaganda and their support, but said nothing about the role of the Labour Party and the trade unions. Yet one of NAC's major aims — a commitment to women's choice and *against* MPs' free vote (which means that they exercise their conscience at women's expense) — has been achieved in the Labour Party.

A poet overlooked

Mary Bernard, Cambridge

John Lucas has quite misread the poetry of Denise Riley (*NS* 15 November). Far from being 'rough and ready', it is exquisitely nuanced and cadenced; far from being 'banal', it is positively Jamesian in its subtlety, ironic complexity and incandescent seriousness. She is above all a moral poet — equal weight on both words. A reviewer who does not even see this most conspicuous feature of her verse has simply failed to engage with it.

Homo-eroticism out of the shade

Peter Horne, London N16

John Coleman recently told of his hasty withdrawal during a showing of Derek Jarman's *The Angelic Conversation*. As this film has now transferred to another cinema and is again available, a word in its defence is necessary.

It is avowedly avante-garde in avoiding narrative and allowing visual forms to arise out of images suggested by some of Shakespeare's sonnets. It is also beautifully and gently homo-erotic. There is a scene in which a male allegorical figure is tenderly kissed by another man. This prompted John Coleman to leave the cinema and describe the film in terms intended to evoke a stale, masculinist, 'common-sense' reaction to what is beyond the pale. Homosexuality is now more visible within the realist forms of TV and cinema, but it seems homo-eroticism is still to be banished to the shade. Kept in the dark, it can be safely patronised, constructed in terms that suggest unseemly private pursuits.

Take me to your Leader BY MOANIN' MINNIE
Blurb has fallen down a collapsed sewer into Hell....
WELCOME TO THE UNDERWORLD. PERHAPS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE SOME OF THE LOCAL PERSONALITIES?
OH GOODY! ORSON WELLES AS HARRY LIME PERHAPS...?
GUIDE
MULTILATERAL MOUNTAIN
OVER THERE YOU SEE SISYPHUS CONDEMNED TO PUSH A HUGE BOULDER UP TO THE SUMMIT AGAIN AND AGAIN THROUGHOUT ETERNITY WITHOUT EVER ACHIEVING ANYTHING
...AND HERE WE HAVE THE DANAIDS, CONDEMNED TO POUR WATER INTO A BOTTOMLESS VASE THROUGHOUT ETERNITY...
DEFENCE SPENDING
...AND HERE IS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT SOLVING NORTHERN IRELAND..
NORTHERN IRELAND

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Derek Jarman's film brings homo-eroticism into the 'public' space of the West End cinema. It is a pity if a *New Statesman* reviewer responds in language which reduces it to the easily categorisable porno movie, treating it as a unit of specialist consumption. As revealed by Andrew Lumsden in several *NS* articles, the overt use of the State to attack Gay's The Word bookshop and the development of Aids have raised issues that problematise the supposedly liberal consensus that allows homosexual acts and identities, but does not like to have homosexual desire or eroticism present to the public gaze.

Glorious mud

Hilary Wainright, Socialist Society

Peter Kellner is horrified by the degree of planning required by a socialist strategy which intervenes in production (*NS* 29 November). He is horrified partly because of the enormous resources in terms of the teams of experts which he assumes would have to be hired.

But his nightmare is his own making: the result of a certain narrowness of vision. Has it not occurred to him that most of the expertise and power required to develop and implement socially purposeful plans for different parts of the economy could lie with Labour's own supporters in the country's workshops, laboratories and offices? And could be harnessed now to develop campaigning proposals for full employment?

Perhaps we should not expect this thought to arise; there is little evidence that it has occurred to the Labour Party leadership. But its absence, even as an option, indicates that Kellner shares some of Keynes's political assumptions as well as his policies on demand management.

Keynes rejected socialism because in his view it was 'as a creed which, preferring the mud to the fish, exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgoisie and the intelligentsia, who, with whatever faults of inequality of life, can surely carry the seed of all human achievement'.

It was for this reason that Keynes sought to develop the theoretical basis for state action that would overcome unemployement yet leave production to the bourgeoisie. Thus the point about Keynesianism is not that it has no view of production; it has a particular view, a view shared by Thatcherites: don't interfere with the manager's right to manage.

It was this 'hands off' approach to production which was to be the source of the failure of Keynesian measures in the 70s. Keynesianism failed in the 70s to maintain full employment, largely because of the structuring strategies of the major corporations requiring to re-establish their rate of profit. Keynesianism, premised on the assumption of leaving production to the capitalist, had no means of challenging these mega-capitalists who were cutting labour whatever the state of demand.

And the latest turn away from Keynesianism towards a concern with detailed intervention is a result of this failure (not of some insidious permeation of Thatcherism on the Left, as Kellner implies). A failure by three successive governments. And it is based on a belief that a fourth failure could lead to an even more vicious backlash than Thatcherism.

A strategy for social control over production cannot be achieved by the State alone. Though such a strategy requires some form of State action on macro spending, on the planning of trade and control over the movement of funds, this needs to be based on the plans and the bargaining power of those on whom production depends. Otherwise the action of the State will constantly be undermined by the extra-parliamentary and very likely, illegal, action of the sort which we now know has already been on the CBI's agenda even in the face of the most moderate intervention in production.

This is why the Keynesian/Fabian mistrust of the struggles, and the expertise, of Labour's own supporters is so damaging to Labour's attempts to develop a convincing economic strategy. Only a vision of socialist planning based on generalising and co-ordinating such local and workplace initiatives could undermine Thatcher's ability to equate the market with democracy and socialism with bureaucracy and uniformity.

Nothing pure here

Stephen Rose, The Open University

Mary Midgley (*NS* 22 November) is to be congratulated at having arrived, at the beginning of her article on evolutionary theory, at the view long accepted among sociologists and historians of science, and within the ranks of the radical science movement, that science is not neutral. It seems that this truism has taken longer to permeate among philosophers.

However, the Midgley of the second half of her article seems sadly at odds with her of the first, for there she abandons her recognition of the value-laden nature of science to explain how decent biology was 'twisted' or 'misused' by eugenicists and racists from Francis Galton to the Nazis and US white supremacists. In offering us this vision she implies that lurking in the darwinian background is some pure, untwisted and un-misused evolutionary theory; that Darwin, 'haunted' by doubts, was no social darwinist. Yet she must know that to create this *cordon sanitaire* around Darwin will not do; no one who has read his discussions of human evolution, of the 'expressions of the emotions' and sexual selection can fail to note his own white-supremacist, class-mediated and patriarchal views, nor how they permeate his supposedly 'value-free' scholarship.

Nineteenth and twentieth century biology has certainly been used to bolster supremacist ideologies, but these ideologies equally permeate biological theory-making and experiment even in the most apparently abstract areas of research. Until we recognise the reality of the two-way transmission of ideology in and out of 'science', we are in danger of failing to understand the complexity of the scientific process, of according a mystique to scientists we don't deserve — and of being continually puzzled and distressed when they (we) apparently break the rules to 'twist' 'false but seductive' theory for ideological purposes.

Wriggling on Maggie's hook

Steve Murray, Belfast, N. Ireland

I'd expected the editorial on the Anglo-Irish agreement (*NS* 22 November) to begin by asking three questions. Why is this government, normally so committed to secrecy and prepared to instigate prosecutions in order to hide its machinations from the public eye, why this cabinet of all should elect to enter into joint action with the Southern Irish Cabinet? Why has a government which has reacted to political opposition across the length and breadth of the land by seeking to concentrate power in its own hands agreed to devolve power potentially away from itself? Why has the government moved from a position where it was solely responsible for what took place in Northern Ireland?

Perhaps the Cabinet sees little possibility of successfully governing Northern Ireland and with their only prospects being ignominious defeat, they've now welcomed the Southern government to the table; a failure shared will be a failure halved for this one aspect of overall Cabinet policy.

Maggie's been on the hook for some time; now she's managed to persuade FitzGerald to join her. By the new year he'll be wriggling on it too!

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Weekend

FOOD!

Don't look to government to prod you into a healthier diet, warns JUDY SADGROVE — it's up to its wellies propping up the farmer

THERE IS A PREVAILING MOOD of resignation in Britain today: resignation to the idea that virtually anything eaten or drunk is likely to be unhealthy. Indeed, shoppers can be heard to apologise for their purchases, muttering shamefacedly, 'I know it's bad for me,' to be reassured by the stock response, 'So is everything, nowadays!' Why is there an obsession with health? And why do so many people feel guilty and pessimistic about their diet?

Medical opinion has been urging dietary modifications for years — changes that call for a reduction in the consumption of fat (particularly saturated), sugar and salt — and an increase in the consumption of fibre. These broad guidelines have been devised as a result of a massive accumulation of evidence indicating that the typical British diet is a major contributing factor in coronary heart disease (CHD) — the biggest single cause of death in Britain (the UK leads the international league table for mortality due to CHD) — and in other common medical conditions, such as disorders of the bowel (including cancer of the colon), dental caries, diabetes, and obesity, to name only those about which there is general agreement as to the part played by diet.

On the other hand, the shelves of shops and supermarkets and the menus of restaurants and fast food takeaways bulge with foodstuffs composed of the very things to be avoided. The raw food producers, the food manufacturers and the catering industry are actively promoting the consumption of refined foods high in precisely that saturated fat, sugar, and salt.

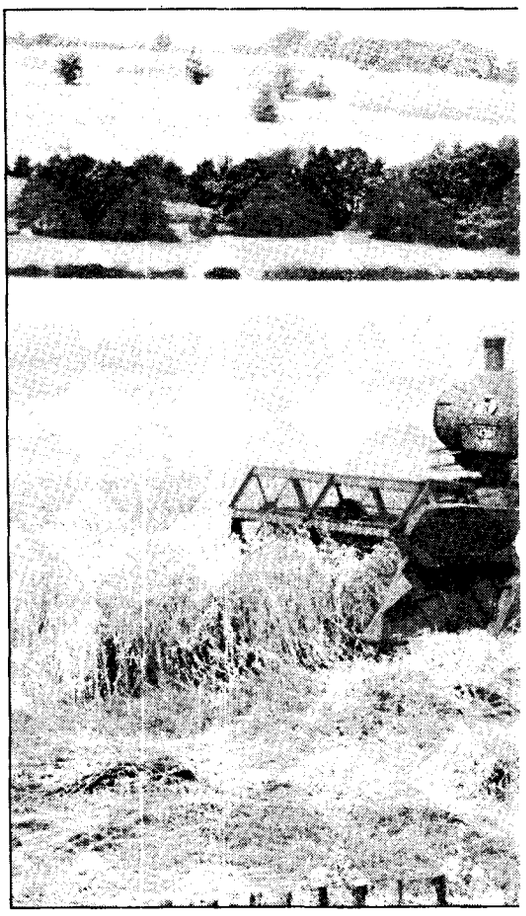
Naive faith in the inherent goodness of the plentiful supply of food may come from the government's declared responsibility to ensure the public 'sufficient safe and wholesome food' (Department of Health and Social Security, *Prevention and Health*, 1977). The government, however, plays a crucial part in maintaining the antagonism between what the health lobby tells us we should eat and what the food industry as a whole offers us.

NINETEENTH CENTURY industrialisation convulsed the agrarian economy. Urbanisation necessitated the transportation of food over considerable distances. Grain prices began to fall as Britain imported wheat from the United States. Fish supplies became more plentiful as a result of steam trawling. The first dairy (Express) was established near King's Cross in the 1860s to receive milk brought in to London by rail. There was an increase in the number of shops for non-perishable food. Early processed foods appeared — muffins, jellied eels and meat pies.

The improvement of food supplies probably contributed to the falling death rate but, despite a rise in real earnings and a fall in the price of foodstuffs, levels of nutrition were low. A high proportion of energy was derived from carbohydrate, principally shop-bought bread, now cheaply available, which was whitened with alum. A sharp rise in the consumption of sugar did not affect an overall fall in the proportion of energy obtained from carbohydrate, however, as a shift towards importing more expensive foods of animal origin took place.

The first intervention in the free market that had operated from the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was prompted by poor harvests during the 1914-18 war. Concern that the Germans might cut off food imports led to the 1917 Corn Production Act, which encouraged home production of wheat and oats by means of a guaranteed minimum price. Deficiency payments were to be made to top up market prices should they fall. The burden on the tax-payer became intolerable, however, as exporting countries recovered after the war and grain prices tumbled. The government rescinded the deficiency payments in 1920, a move which threw British farmers into poverty intensified by the Great Depression.

The farming community was rescued during the 1930s by a series of protective measures whose purpose was not the strategic one of reducing the nation's dependence on imported food but was positive social engineering — to alleviate the problems of the contracting farm industry. Import restrictions and subsidies once again favoured home production, although the



continuing import of cheap meat, wheat and butter from the USA and Commonwealth concentrated British efforts largely on eggs, milk, and vegetables. In addition, farmers were actively supported by exemption from rates — a relief still in existence today and reckoned to be worth £200 million per annum to farmers. (Richard Body: *Agriculture: The Triumph and The Shame*, Temple Smith, 1982). Meanwhile, developments in food packaging and processing had led to the emergence of multiple retail outlets and brand names. Gradual improvements in nutritional levels for most people were cemented by the food rationing imposed during the 1939-45 war. For the first time, the government planned rational minimum dietary levels within the constraints of wartime scarcity. As early as three years before the war plans were laid for the organised supply and distribution of food. The Scientific Food Committee apportioned foods according to nutritional value and availability. The fat content of the national diet fell by 6 per cent while the protein content rose by the same amount. Consumption of bread, fruit and vegetables soared while consumption of meat plummeted. Some foods were, and still are, deliberately fortified to maintain a balanced intake of nutrients — flour with calcium, margarine with vitamins A and D.

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Farming today: combine harvester feeds grain direct to EEC store while special attachment hoovers up taxpayers' money. Nutritional value? Can that be written off against tax?

Camera Press

As the emphasis shifted away from foods of animal origin towards a diet based on cereals and vegetables, nearly 6 million acres of grassland were converted to arable (with subsidised slag and lime). A priority was placed on imports of feed for dairy cattle, to preserve production of the milk essential for mothers, children and the welfare clinics. Farmers were guaranteed high prices for their wheat, paving the way for the rise to the prosperity they enjoy today. Farmers' net income rose by over 300 per cent from £57½ million in 1938-39 to £230½ million in 1943-44!

Public gratitude for the farming effort during the war and a residual feeling of strategic vulnerability were combined in the passage of the 1947 Agriculture Act to promote a stable and efficient agricultural industry. Originally, market prices were guaranteed, but were replaced in 1953 by deficiency payments, thus transferring the cost of the subsidy paid to farmers from the consumer to the taxpayer. In 1955, when rationing had finally come to an end, the Ministry of Food was again subsumed under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, since the link between food supplies and health was no longer deemed to be of any national significance.

Technological advances in food processing were by then ready to pander to consumer demand for those luxuries, fat and sugar in particular, that had been in such short supply. Traditional — well-founded — worries about the public's *underconsumption* of vital nutrients began to give way during the 1960s to fears about unprecedented levels of overconsumption — of animal and dairy products, sliced white bread, cakes, biscuits, confectionery, soft drinks, and salted snacks. But the stage was already set for the final act which sealed the political ascendancy of farming interests at the expense of health. Britain entered the Common Market in 1973.

THE OLD SYSTEM of support changed to the EEC one of buying up all surplus production at a set 'intervention' price and imposing import levies on, for example, wheat from the United States (used in sliced white bread) in order to maintain high prices and high farmers' income.

This shift meant that the consumer (as opposed to the taxpayer) was once again bearing the brunt of taxes imposed on imported food. And, contrary to the stated goal of self-sufficiency, the EEC remains the world's major food importer and the United States's most important customer. (See Richard Norton-Taylor: *Whose Land is it Anyway?* Turnstone Press, 1982.)

Since all production, even of things in surplus like milk and wheat, is bought in by the EEC at a set high price, farmers continually strive to increase their productivity. This is achieved, for instance, by the (subsidised) creation of new strains of seed, massive mechanisation which can be written off against tax (tractors now outnumber farmworkers), and intensive fertilisation and draining of poor quality land. With dairy farming, it is achieved through increasing milk yields via protein, soya-based cattle feed imported from the United States — the number of cows milked in the EEC has remained virtually stable since 1973, but far more milk is churned out of today's 25 million bovines. Paradoxically, lowering CAP intervention prices in an effort to bring supply into some approximate relationship with demand also boosts productivity, as farmers try to make up their potentially lost income.

This process has concentrated massive wealth into the hands of an ever dwindling number of farmers. Their net income rose from £832 million in 1972-73 to £1,162 million in 1980-81. Richard Body for the Institute of Fiscal Studies has calculated that the percentage of farmers' income contributed by the taxpayer rose over that period from £47 million to £166 million. In 1981 the Prime Minister admitted that since 1979 there had been a percentage rise in public expenditure on agriculture of 13.9 per cent.

These high prices naturally condemn Britain's low-paid and unemployed to a sub-standard diet. The 'efficiency' drive has created enormous surpluses of raw food, often dumped in the philanthropic guise of food aid on a Third World impoverished by its inability to compete in the market.

Two thirds of the cereals produced in this country are not for human consumption, but are purchased by livestock farmers — the poor relations of the farming family — to feed ever fatter animals. Meanwhile, 'efficient' farming has introduced other unwelcome hazards to health, including potentially dangerous residues of pesticides, the liberal use of hormones to promote animal growth, and rising levels of nitrates in the water supply.

IN CONTRAST to British agriculture's dependency on intervention and subsidy for its profits, the food manufacturers look remarkably healthy. Dominated by a few multinational conglomerates, they thrive on simple principles: added value — transforming cheap raw foods (potatoes for example) into expensive products (crisps); no wastage — devising imaginative methods to stretch expensive commodities (meat and fish, for instance) by recouping the dross (bones, among other unmentionables) and thinning with cheap flavouring matter; and creation and exploitation of a demand for convenience foods.

Concern over the effect on health of a wide range of permitted chemical additives to food has fuelled consumer demand for clear food labelling — a necessary adjunct to informed purchasing. It has been estimated, however, that while food additives might account for perhaps 1 per cent of deaths from cancer, the actual dietary inbalance probably accounts for around 35 per cent of such deaths. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) seems to be impeding the introduction of food labelling by putting forward proposals for the labelling of total fat and saturated fat content only. Far more details are required to cover calory, carbohydrate (sugar, in particular), protein, salt and dietary fibre content, in addition to information about fat content in understandable form.

Nevertheless, the message to eat less fatty animal foods and more fibrous foods of vegetable origin is slowly permeating down. 1985 figures from MAFF suggest that people are changing their diet: sales of whole milk and white bread are declining as sales of skimmed milks and wholemeal bread rise.

The most lucid guide to healthy eating currently available is *Eating for Health* (Christopher Robbins, Granada 1985). The government obviously has more important things to think about than health. Farmers for example.

Judy Sadgrove is an assistant editor of The Lancet.

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Not to be taken so seriously

Mary Harron

Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity
ELIZABETH WILSON
Virago £11.95 & £5.95

THERE IS A very odd fashion to be seen on the streets of Manhattan at the moment and it began, as fashions often do, by accident. A couple of years ago a few executive women — wearing the 'Dress For Success' uniform of tailored suit and string tie — began wearing gym shoes to work. The combination of skirt and gym shoes looked hideous but Manhattan pavements are hard, high heels hurt and they could carry their good shoes in a bag and put them on when they got to work.

Then, slowly, this became a 'look'. More than that, it became a symbol of 'Executive Woman': if you wore a little tailored suit and gym shoes you must be successful, or at least people would think you were. Secretaries adopted the look as a symbol of career aspirations; women began wearing heavy trainers, suitable for long-distance running, just to walk across the street for lunch. Now the streets are so thronged with gym shoes that the look has lost its status and executive women are going back to high heels.

The ugliness, incidentally, is part of the appeal of this look; as Elizabeth Wilson points out, in America 'the post-feminist career woman of the 1980s has eliminated sexuality' in order to show she means business. But is this look a *fashion*, or should we define it in terms of social anthropology, or psychology?

Elizabeth Wilson sets out to address fashion's 'tantalising and slippery' essence, although her book's great weakness is that she never defines what fashion actually *is*. Although its historical detail is marvellous, *Adorned In Dreams* suffers from a lack of focus that sends its argument wandering over an absurdly wide range, tossing out banalities like 'the industrial revolution consolidated Western faith in the rational and reinforced the scientific attitude' as it skips through world history. And did she have to run through the entire Frankfurt School attack on popular culture in such detail? Wilson is far too defensive about fashion as a serious subject for study: so, instead of studying it, spends her time answering other academics' theories.

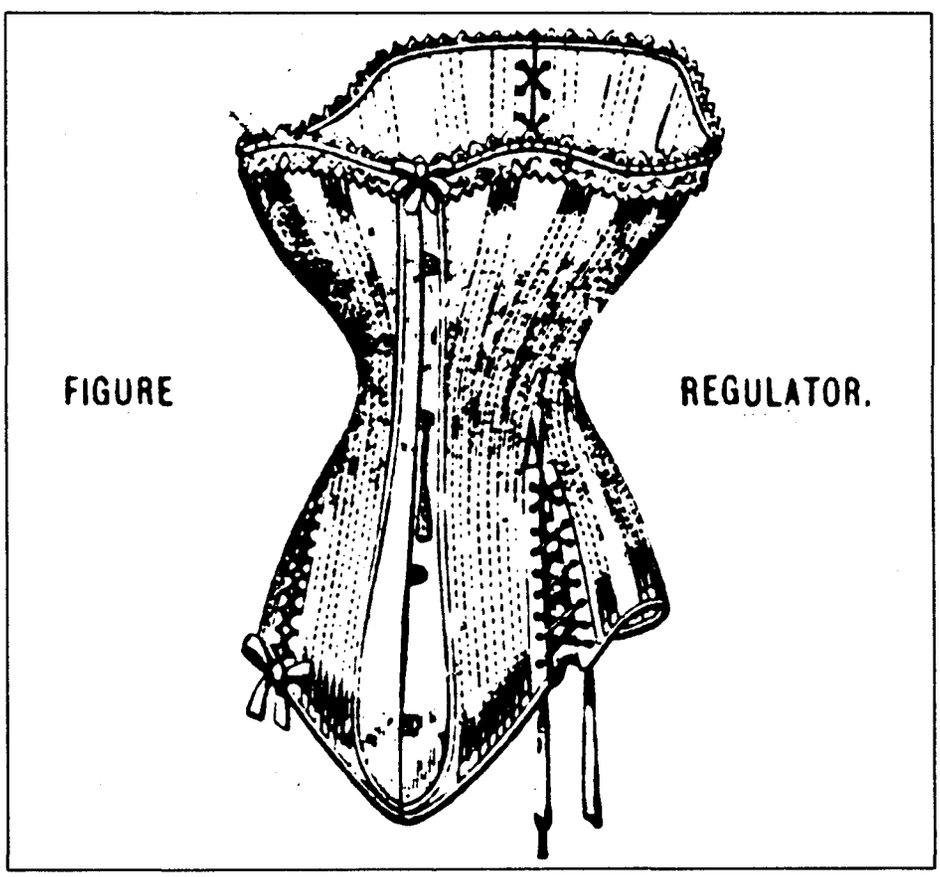
Evidently Wilson is not a cultural theoretician, but she is a very good social historian, judging by her chapter on 'The Fashion Industry'. This is full of fascinating, and chilling, information about how the old sweatshops of Whitechapel and the Lower East Side have been replaced by the 'Polyester Roads' of Eurasia: 'sweating on a global scale', where children work in worse conditions than in the factories of Victorian England, making the cheap clothes that are often the basis of 'alternative fashion'.

Paradoxes abound. The Parisian fashion industry of the 1940s had all the same horrors as London and New York, yet 'this esoteric and above all theatrical world fascinated many of the workers, who were proud to dedicate their lives to it. The production of a collection seemed like the world of a film set or theatre.' Christian Dior helped create the image of couturier as romantic artist yet, through his alliance with industrialist Marcel Boussac, 'his most important contribution was to launch *haute couture* into the realms of big business.'

The chapter on 'Fashion and Eroticism' illustrates Wilson's strengths and weaknesses. She offers a gem of a detail — 'Laced up corsetry was worn for several centuries and tight lacing was widely practised until the close of the nineteenth century. Then in the space of a few short years it was reborn as a sexual perversion . . .' — followed by perfectly incoherent generalisations on how 'the distinction between underwear and outerwear reflects the distinction between the public and the private that has become so important a part of modern life and which was less developed before the eighteenth century.'

Elizabeth Wilson is obviously very good on class relations, as witnessed by her account of the growth of the department store. What she isn't very good on is fashion. She understands clothes that have a literal or symbolic meaning, as in the rebel styles dealt with in 'Oppositional Dress'. But she has a strangely lurid, melodramatic view of ordinary dressing up. Here she is on the 'Aerobics' fashion for wearing dancing clothes:

Yet this new woman of the sidewalks achieves her



A question of fashion? Once ultra-respectable, now more likely to be found in a sex shop

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total meaning only in the context of the danger all around her . . . Ex-patients from closed-down mental hospitals spilled out into the city, they speak the threat of madness and violence against which the dancing girl's energy is revealed as classic hysteria. She can preserve the brightness only because she does not 'see' the danger, but blots it out in hysterical denial.

All that, just because she's wearing legwarmers? Later Wilson gives a definition of the beginnings of Seventies style: 'The art nouveau nymph, stoned and tubercular, replaced the empty vivacity of the sixties girl who was always having such "fun".' Why is the word fun in quotation marks? Is she suggesting that girls in the Sixties didn't have fun? As for the tubercular nymphs — I remember my schoolfriends and I trying for that look, not because we were depressives but because it was fashionable, and if it had been fashionable to coat our bodies with peanut butter we would have done that too.

There is an absurdity at the heart of fashion, in the absolute randomness of its rapidly changing aesthetic. Fashion often merges with other processes: the desire for status, the desire to shock, the desire to conceal or alter identity. But it is also unique unto itself, with its compulsive search for novelty combined with an equally compulsive urge to conform.

Elizabeth Wilson tells us that in the late 20th century, as the monopoly of the fashion houses has broken down, fashion has become 'performance art', a vehicle of self-definition within the post-modernist chaos. This is sometimes true, but few people have the gift to be true innovators in fashion. It's a talent like any other and most of us follow along, shifting from high heels to Dr Martens according to the mood of the times. Fashion makes lemmings of us all.

Basically *Adorned In Dreams* takes fashion too seriously; like so many academics, faced with pop culture, Wilson can't believe it's as simple as it looks. For all her perceptions — for example, that where in most fields high art and pop culture have separated, in fashion they've merged — she can't face the obvious. In her conclusion she says 'the daring of fashion speaks dread as well as desire; the shell of chic, the aura of glamour always hide a wound.' Well, have you ever read an interview with Jerry Hall? Happy as a pig in shit; we should all be that lucky. Give the superficial their due, and the sociology of fashion can get moving.

PAPERBACKS

From Russia with jokes

Alan Brien

THIS YEAR the fiction-reading public has been consolidating its discovery of the South Americans. For me, 1985 has meant the rediscovery of the Russians. Not that I was already familiar with the four books reviewed below — but reading them reminded me that 'magic realism', the safari through the looking-glass, the well-researched fantasy, the bestiary in modern idiom, was long a Slavic, before it became a Hispanic, mode.

Clarence Brown's **Portable Twentieth-Century Russian Reader**, a 600-page Penguin bargain at £4.95, contains something from nearly all of the golden oldies — Gorky, Chekhov, Tolstoy, Babel, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn, even Nabokov. But the most glittering nugget in this treasure heap is a complete novel (130 pages), by Yuri Olesha.

First, let me say that it is very funny. Not funny allowing for the period (1927) or considering the place (a Russia soon to be under Stalin's tyranny) or despite the differences in language. But a laugh from the first paragraph where the thrusting, dynamic Director of Food Production sits on the lavatory tunelessly bellowing a ditty of his own invention that runs — 'Go to it, peristalsis, tram-ba-ba-bum!'

The first-person narrator is about as anti- a hero as can be imagined in a society where even tragedies had to be optimistic. He is an Oblomov reduced to crashing on other people's sofas, a Lucky Jim among the KGB, greedy, shy, lecherous, above all envious in a spineless sort of way. You like him (much of the time it is hard not to be him) but it is the others you admire. They are noble, energetic, active: a bit, but not very, boring.

Though the narrative is full of invention, twists and reversals and false ends, Olesha never drops the double-stitch of crook/rebel, success/creep, freeman/coward, beauty/careerist and the rest which keeps the story so well sewn together. But it is the thread itself which is the most precious part of the package, a use of language at once naive and powerful, simple yet subtle, that Olesha seems to be inventing for himself as he goes along.

Yevgeny Zamyatin is represented in Brown's anthology by a typical short story, given his obsession with energy and entropy and the heat-death of the universe, about a Soviet couple during the aftermath of civil war expiring like Ice Age cave-dwellers.

I remained unprepared however for the pair of astoundingly original short stories (together a mere 95 pages) published by Flamingo (£2.50), **Islanders and Fishers of Men**. In 1916 Zamyatin, a highly qualified engineer, had been sent by the Tsarist Government to Britain to superintend the building of ice-breakers. His experience of lodging with the middle class of our north-east clearly hit him with all the culture-shock of Gulliver's visit to Brobdingnag.

To cope with these strangely programmed, clockwork people, he must have felt, like Olesha, that he had to devise a special way of using words. The result is a unique literary style, as individual as the brushwork of Picasso, using bright poster-paint colours, direct, accurate, blueprint directions, simple outlines containing complex mixtures, like an animated cartoon for super-sophisticated audiences.

One of his techniques is to isolate character into a single image, and then use that to invoke them. It sounds crude, but works marvellously. Having identified Lady Campbell's lips as 'pale pink, very thin and unusually long; they wriggled like worms, moving their tails up and down', he has only to note 'the worms twitched' to summon her up in her terrible entirety. Another genuinely entertaining read which deserves to be a best-seller at least between Middlesbrough and Morpeth.

Ilya Ehrenburg has never lacked fame and some fans in the West. Personally, I have never believed that his novels matched his volumes of autobiography. These are vivid, intelligent, genuine attempts to tell it as it was, much mocked by reviewers here whose sole strategy for resisting threats from above was fiddling their expenses. But **The Life of the Automobile** (Pluto, £4.50) is a revelation. ▷

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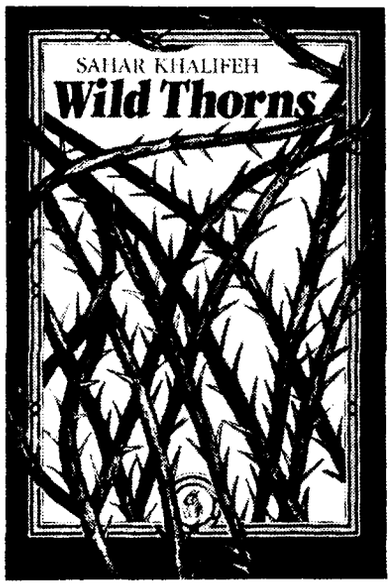

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Written in 1929, it establishes Ehrenburg's precedence over Dos Passos as the creator of the multi-layer fictional-factional saga of a society. Here the motor-car becomes the all-purpose symbol of a frightened, aggressive, desperately expanding capitalism. It held even a non-driver like me riveted from chapter to chapter, through the conveyor belt, tyres, petrol, roads, the Stock Exchange, unable to believe there could be more, and yet wanting more. *The Life of the Automobile* is the work of a novelist rather than a journalist, heightening reality without falsifying it, in a way later copied by Capote, Mailer, Schindler and others. So powerfully does the author enter into his characters, most of them true-life rather than imagined, that I found myself at times wishing they were fictional and so able to escape the ending history had allotted them.

Benedict Erofeev, author of **Moscow Circles** (Writers & Readers, £3.95), is a direct descendant of Zamyatin and Olesha. I did not find this diary of Benny, an alcohollectual dissident rumbling through a surreal circuit of Moscow, as good for a laugh, if only because there is an inevitable depression in finding that the more a society changes, the more it remains the same. Benny has been forced lower than his predecessors because only by opting out on a level approaching that of the Bowery bum can he succeed in being beneath authority's concern. The humour is still there. But now it has turned as grim and sour as that on our side of a Genet or a Burroughs.

By comparison, Western comedy seems to be floundering about looking in vain for targets other than the ineptitude, clumsiness and naivety of the principal character. William Boyd's **Stars and Bars** (Penguin, £2.95) is a step back from *An Ice-Cream War*, concerning itself with a bumbling, accident-prone British art-dealer lured off to a Cold Comfort Farm, American-style, in the shallow South where he becomes the joke pawn of the traditional loopy millionaire. Boyd has a passing slash at hypocritical Bible-bashers, and the penetration of even high culture by organised crime, but the main push of the narrative is poor old Henderson Dores putting his foot in it, whatever it is. Eventually, he is obliged, for no very good reason, to flee naked around New York by night. This sort of thing seems best left to Tom Sharpe.

How routine it all is is suggested by **Pitch-Dark** (Sphere, £2.95) the first novel since 1977 of the New Yorker writer, Renata Adler. It is almost *Stars and Bars* the other way round. Ms Adler's heroine also escapes from domestic sexual complications by fleeing to the backwoods of a foreign, though English-speaking, country, this time the Republic of Ireland. She meets very much the same kind of comedy-thriller characters, also has her hire-car vandalised and abandoned, also brushes against what she imagines to be sinister, undercover forces.

William Boyd's story is told straightforwardly and with elegant precision. Renata Adler, perhaps suspecting it will otherwise seem too predictable, rearranges it *nouveau roman* style continually introducing mentions of people and incidents long before we actually meet them on the page. All this achieves is a lot of turning back, and eventually in desperation turning forward, to little avail.

Mary Flanagan's **Bad Girls** (Futura, £2.25) flits about from one side of the Atlantic to the other, where she seems equally at home. Her subject is often death, decay, treachery, despair. There is little she is unwilling to face, but what a face! Bright, sly, witty, tender, sexy, brave, frivolous, it has an expression for whatever life throws at it. A delight. □

Absolute for peace

Dora Russell

Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War
ANNE WILTSHER *Pandora* £5.95

HOW GLAD I AM to see this book. For the first time in 70 years the attempt by women to stop the First World War is described in detail for all the world to read. Historians have repeatedly dinned into us how splendidly the women agitating for the vote turned their energies to helping men win the war; making munitions, driving ambulances; Mrs Pankhurst and Lloyd George by then on excellent terms.

I was one of the younger generation of the women whom this book describes. As an undergraduate at Girton College, Cambridge, I applauded and admired the Suffragettes but was not then acquainted with any of them.

When war broke out on 4 August 1914, I was playing exciting mixed hockey on the superb sands of Newquay in Cornwall. Back from my holiday I saw in the press mention of the Women's Emergency Corps. Before my term began I was down at Tilbury helping them with the Belgian refugees. From this book I learn for the first time of Mrs Pethick Lawrence's association with that group and of her prompt visit to campaign for peace in the United States. I was ignorant too of the international extent of the Suffrage Movement. Nor, until I witnessed the distress of those women and children at Tilbury, had I associated the campaign for women's rights with pacifism and war.

The reaction of the women's movement, with some exceptions, was exactly the same. To the rest of the world, likewise, the war came as a severe shock. Norman Angell's book *The Great Illusion*, widely read, had suggested that economic ties and trade would render war in the modern world impossible. Jane Adams in the United States shared this illusion. Nonetheless, she was one of the first to protest against the war in her book *Towards the Peace That Shall Last*.

The leading figure in the women's urgent drive to get the American President to intervene for negotiation, and in most of the events that followed, was Rosika Schwimmer, a Hungarian; unconventional in dress and habit ('she actually smoked and wore no corset') she had nine languages and an intrepid approach to eminent statesmen. In 1914 she was in London to start work with the International Women's Suffrage Alliance. She achieved access to Lloyd George, actually discussed with him the risk of war and, when it broke out, was, as an enemy alien, away to America, ceaselessly campaigning for American intervention. For many, as for me, will

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this book be the first time they have even heard her name?

In Cambridge the issue turned for us mainly on conscientious objection. Objectors were at considerable risk, some nearly faced execution. On the fringes of news we knew little of the Ford Peace Ship and the Women's Congress at the Hague except the press ridicule. I never heard that 180 women, many well known and distinguished, were prepared to embark on two ships to get to the Congress. The Home Office suddenly intervened, objecting to a political meeting so near the seat of war, refused or cancelled passports (recently invented). It was Catherine Marshall who then induced Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary, to issue 24 passports to women whom he would select. Announcing this in Parliament, McKenna added that the Admiralty had just cancelled sailings between Britain and Holland. The American women, on their ship the Noordam, were stuck in mid-channel, the British at Tilbury. Only a few had already got over; some, including Schwimmer and the American Lella Secor, had travelled on the Ford Peace Ship the Oscar Two and were vigorously campaigning in Stockholm and Denmark. The Admiralty relented just in time for the Americans to land at Rotterdam. The Congress was held.

Arriving home, Lella Secor was absorbed in a passionate campaign to keep America out of the war. In 1917, when I was with my father at the British War Mission in New York, she was near nervous breakdown because of her failure. I knew nothing about her then, we were just two young idealists in our early twenties. Almost overnight I became a pacifist and a socialist, convinced that the United States was most likely to make for world dominion.

Looking back I support Rosika Schwimmer in her claim that this episode was one of the great events of modern history. It could have succeeded. Ford's faith in the possibility of arresting hostilities by a *commercially* inspired negotiation was genuine and profound. He was overwhelmed with offers of support, prepared to spend lavishly. Americans were then a people for whom the Statue of Liberty still meant something. Nor were the women suffragists underlings. Like Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her book *Man Made World*, they tended to regard women as the superior sex, men as childish in their addiction to war. Lella hints at the silly behaviour of the press on the Peace Ship and how Ford's business colleagues may have undermined his confidence so that, in Stockholm, he remained secluded.

Is it not possible still that business and women together might succeed where national politicians fail?

The pioneers of great causes do not often have happy endings. They fade into obscurity, occasionally discovered and honoured after their death. Anne Wiltsher's capable research follows their continuing efforts, with glimpses of poverty and sadness. Yet in 1948 Rosika Schwimmer was just about to receive the Nobel Peace Prize when she died. In a message sent a month before her death she reprimanded women in this 'third atomic era' for taking part in war, 'forgetting that we sought equality for our half of the human race not at the lowest, but at the highest level of human aspirations.' □

Guns and angels

Paul Binding

Collected Poems 1928-1985
STEPHEN SPENDER *Faber* £4.95
Journals 1939-1983
STEPHEN SPENDER *Faber* £15
The Oedipus Plays of Sophocles
STEPHEN SPENDER *Faber* £12.50

IN THE *Collected Poems* there appears 'The Exiles', a crystallisation into six lines of the longer, reflective 'Exiles from their Land, History their Domicile' in *The Still Centre*:

> History has tongues
> Has angels has guns
> Has saved has praised
> Her exiles-in-life death-returned
> For whom her printed page
> Is heaven on which their names write worlds.

These lines are of Spender's essence, as poet and thinker. They express a Platonist vision of History as an Absolute, a Good, which can vindicate and absolve and which reveals the ultimate moral significance of those events which make up its temporal record.

Few living English writers have been more imaginatively concerned with these events, with the 'guns' of history. Spender has been engaged by (and with) Weimar Germany, pre-Anschluss Austria, Civil War Spain, the England of the Depression and the Blitz, Occupied Germany and America in the grip of McCarthyism and the Vietnam anguish; and all these have elicited from him complex responses. But these responses have always been heightened by awareness of psychic life. Though in early critical works he felt the need to argue in a 'political' time for the importance of the personal, his art has always exhibited a sense of the indissolubility of the two.

That famous early poem, now called 'The Truly Great', praises its subjects for never forgetting 'The essential delight of the blood drawn from ageless springs/Breaking through rocks in worlds before our earth' and for never allowing 'gradually the traffic to smother/with noise and fog the flowering of the spirit'. Such men are the 'angels' of 'The Exiles' (and are often literal exiles, too). Spender's mentors are not hard to seek and are all artists with something of the mystic about them: Beethoven, Wordsworth, Goethe, Shelley, Rilke, Lorca, Eliot, Stravinsky.

One of the most remarkable features of all Spender's productions is this fusion of the individual and the collective. In 'September Journal, 1939' he writes about his feelings of desolation at the outbreak of the War (which coincided with the break-up of his first marriage). But the desolation was, he realised, not his alone.

> Above all the world should be home, it should be somewhere where everyone has his place . . . The world suffers from the worst and least necessary of mental illnesses: home sickness.

This kind of vision has characterised

In the *TLS* on December 6

ECONOMICS

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Spender's presentation of the strains our century has imposed on its forced travellers. He has written the most emotionally moving and honest poems about the Spanish Civil War and has captured the beseiged, bewildered, patriotic life of England during the War in lyrics of a peculiarly concentrated charity. And, as one who spent his childhood among the ruins of urban Germany, I can testify that the 'German Diary' section of the *Journals* conveys the sense of devastation and displacement of that time, that place better than anything else I have read except for the early novels of Heinrich Böll.

Both the *Collected Poems* and the *Journals* impress by a quality one might be surprised to find in an *oeuvre* spanning more than half-a-century of unprecedented upheaval — consistency. This consistency can be viewed fruitfully in terms of what he has *not* done — or become. He has *not* abandoned humanism for some retreat into religious orthodoxy or heterodox elitism; he has *not* turned aside from the fret of the contemporary world, even though his interest in the interplay of personality and time has undoubtedly increased; he has *not* become a reactionary (unless the anti-communism which, in fact, began in the Thirties is called this); he has *not* felt compelled to change his style or form to accommodate shifts in fashion, but has remained true to the idiom patently natural to him from the first — the densely worked lyric which he derives from Wilfred Owen and from Rilke. A later poem such as 'A Girl Who Has Drowned Herself Speaks' has many attributes of earlier poems like 'Van Der Lubbe' or 'Polar Sympathy': the same coiled imagery, the same sensuous rendering of a painful condition through a kind of inverted panegyric, the same nervous yet intensely controlled rhythm. In the *Journals* Spender tells us that he has, like Valery, mostly worked from *lignes données*, certain lines containing the germ of a whole poem.

There is another consistency in an aspect of his career which might have surprised the young Spender most: an involvement with America which led him in the Fifties to a pro-Americanism inseparable from the sad history of the magazine *Encounter* (a history in which, however, Spender's part was entirely honourable). As Michel Tournier has pointed out, America in an important sense was the successor of the Weimar that Spender and his friends so admired for its freedom, its democratic egalitarianism and its willingness to experiment. Moreover, Spender's staunch anti-totalitarianism made him naturally an enemy of all those who turned their blind eyes to the denial of human rights in the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries. Nevertheless, there does seem to me a certain suspension of full critical powers in Spender's treatment of America. Somehow the analyses of American affairs that occur in the *Journals* lack the exemplary sharpness of other pages; there is too much dissolution into anecdote. Interestingly, the American influences on Spender's work are hard to detect. Even those poems with an American setting suggest a European sensibility and manner.

Indeed, Spender's progress reflects the fructifying interaction of English and European cultures since the Romantic movement which stands so securely in his ancestry. Not the least proof of this is his version of *Oedipus*, written for the Oxford Playhouse in 1983 and subsequently heavily revised. Where Spender attempts the solemn mysteries of Oedipus at Colonus we are reminded of the culturally pluralist and Platonist poems of Hölderlin; in the antiphonies and delight in formal order throughout the play we remember the Cocteau of *La Machine Infernale*. But in the concentration on the human interactions, on the validity of each and every response (however distant from the author's own sensibility) we have the compassionate English humanist tradition.

I am sure that these new editions of Spender's achievements will prompt not only new assessments of a poet who has produced works of great moral and linguistic beauty but also a re-appreciation of perhaps the most vital and internationally valuable strand of our British culture. □

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FICTION

Light and shade

Adewale Maja-Pearce

The Lover
MARGUERITE DURAS *Collins* £7.95
The Ambassador
ANDRE BRINK *Faber* £9.95
Wild Thorns
SAHAR KHALIFEH *Al Saqi* £8.95 & £3.95
Cracked Wheat
HUGH COOK *Mosaic (dist. Calder)* £4.95

THE LOVER is the story of a 15-year-old French girl's affair with a wealthy Chinese man set against the background of pre-war Indochina. Years later, when she had finally set it all down, she recalls how 'the light fell through the windows, through the blinds. It seemed a pity not to tell how it was.' But it is hardly a story of love. There is nothing romantic or sentimental about the way the light fell.

It is more a story of destruction: of an impoverished and widowed mother who was 'clearly mad'; of an older brother who stole to support his opium habit; and of a younger brother who never properly grew up. It is also about the corruption of French Indochina: the officials ensure that her mother remains mad by relieving her of her life's savings in exchange for a plot of useless land. And because the family is poor and the Chinese lover wealthy they encourage the girl's affair at the same time as they despise him: he is only Chinese after all. So her mother, hearing about the affair for the first time, strips her naked and beats her, and then accepts an invitation to dinner with him. It is no wonder, then, that it is doomed from the beginning. One day she simply boards the boat back to France and it is all over, as casually as it had begun the day he picked her up in his black limousine while she was waiting to catch the ferry across the Mekong river on her way to school.

Doomed relationships is also the theme of **The Ambassador,** which was first published in Afrikaans in 1963 and in an earlier English translation the following year. In his note at the front of the new edition the author is somewhat apologetic about its glaring deficiencies, as well he might be, but justifies its re-publication on the grounds that it marked a turning-point in his career as a writer, and therefore might be of some interest.

Set in Paris, it is about the relationship of two men, the South African Ambassador and his Third Secretary, with a young woman, Nicolette, who works as a stripper in a seedy nightclub. Why both men are interested in her is anybody's guess. She is meant to be the archetypal femme fatale who won't be possessed and who destroys those who attempt to do so, but she comes across as merely an empty-headed little fool with a neurotic disposition. This only makes the men appear even more idiotic, particularly the Ambassador, whose career and marriage are put in jeopardy as a result of his association with her. Anyway, in the end the Third Secretary loses out and commits suicide, but the Ambassador fares no better: his marriage falls apart, he loses his job and Nicolette mysteriously disappears without so much as a by your leave. So the Ambassador takes himself off to the cinema, where he watches a second-rate American movie and reflects upon life: 'Or was it true after all: was everything, essentially, a melodramatic tale told in cliches?' Not everything, perhaps, but certainly this second-rate novel, which couldn't be in greater contrast to the beauty and clarity of *The Lover*.

Clichés aren't the only problem with *The Ambassador*. What might have been a passable short story is padded out with a lot of phony symbolism and any number of different points of view. One suspects the hand of Faulkner in all of this, with the same story told by each of the main characters in turn. This is an unnecessary complication which adds nothing to the central drama. The strength of **Wild Thorns**, on the other hand, lies in its directness and simplicity. In a straightforward account of the daily humiliations of living in an Israeli-occupied Arab town on the West Bank, the author, herself a Palestinian, poses the question: what does one do when one finds oneself an exile 'in the heart of the motherland'? Her conclusion is pessimistic: collaboration is as futile as resistance; the one wears you down and the other gets you killed.

Wild Thorns deals with matters of life and death, which partly accounts for its sense of urgency. It is also well written. Neither can be said for **Cracked Wheat**, a collection of ten short stories by a Canadian writer of Dutch ancestry. All the stories deal, one way or another, with the Dutch community in Canada, and a dull lot they sound if these stories are anything to go by. But I suspect this is unfair; I suspect that Hugh Cook is just a bad writer who betrays his limitations by resorting to the trick ending in an effort to pretend that there is actually more to the stories than we first suspected. □

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FILMS: 1

In the fourth dimension

John Coleman

Survivors of history: Paul Scofield and Maria Schell in Brody's *Nineteen Nineteen*

Nineteen Nineteen (15)
Curzon, Mayfair
A Zed & Two Noughts (18)
Lumiere
Turtle Diary (PG)
Curzon, West End
Back to the Future (PG)
Empire
Pumping Iron II — The Women (PG)
Classic, Oxford Street

FILM IS A present-tense medium: *now* she or he is doing, saying, remembering *this*. The beauty of anthropologist-documentarist Hugh Brody's **Nineteen Nineteen,** conceived and written with Michael Ignatieff, is that it exploits 'the folded past, carried within each of us like linen stacked in a cupboard' with an exquisite fluency all too rare in the cinema.

That image of linen, to be unfolded 'layer by layer, and . . . laid out as the sheet of the present', comes from John Berger's sensitive afterword to the published screenplay (Faber £3.95), a short critical piece that could hardly be bettered. The layers are four. 1970: and Sophie (Maria Schell), idly watching TV in New York, sees herself and a stranger, ageing Alexander (Paul Scofield), as separate interviewees in a programme about Freud. Flying to Vienna, she contacts this fortuitous link with 1919 and the second layer, which is their young selves (played by Clare Higgins and Colin Firth) in consulting-room sessions and leading their distinct lives in the outside world: Sophie as a father-hating ingénue in love with a worldly Anna (Diana Quick) who uses men; Alexander as a White Russian aristo reduced to waiting table in a restaurant and capable of sex only with women who otherwise disgust him.

Moving round his gloomy, memento-stuffed apartment, the old Alexander briefly recalls childhood fears and happiness (layer three), his nurse reading from Pushkin, his picking mushrooms with their peasants — at which his visitor, a confessed socialist, explodes: 'They were the most exploited people on earth!', echoed by the fourth dimension or layer: black-and-white stills of haunted Russian faces. One says 'dimension' here because, throughout the film, this larger 'outer' *time* — the world-historical context in which these two survivors lived their private dilemmas — is cut in, with a perfect unstressed aptness lacking in Klimov's *Agony*, via old monochrome newsreels, archive material, photos, ranging from revolutionary crowds through grand occasions to Hitler's triumphal entry into Vienna.

Big events governed the fates of Sophie and Alexander, but it is their individual, special predicaments — their case-histories outside the immediate ones probed by Freud (who is reduced to the now shrewd and amused, now maybe misinterpreting, but always disembodied voice of Frank Finlay) — which fascinate through small gestures, pauses, outbursts, minutiae of expressions as they *use* each other to disburden long-meditated angsts and accommodations. They part affectionately, after a stroll through the city, with the sense that both have obscurely benefited. Magnificently played, so that the camera can confidently close in on faces, and finely edited (with David Gladwell's assistance), this chamber-piece is about the last resorts of two people with little in common — except the ragged march of history — and how they got there; about memory, time, appetite and happenstance; about the tangled consciousnesses of a woman called Sophie, a man called Alexander. Not to be missed.

One can well imagine Freud himself having recourse to some friendly couch after experiencing Peter Greenaway's **A Zed & Two Noughts,** an elegantly framed affair of surpassing silliness and some nastiness. Made in Rotterdam, it exhibits twin brothers employed by a loony zoo (or ZOO in huge blue incandescent letters) working out their grief when their wives die in a car crash caused by a swan. Bosomy Alba Bewick (Andrea Ferréol), the driver who emerges minus a leg, becomes bed-ridden mistress to both; a zoo-whore in black undies tells them dirty stories for anticipated publication; *O*liver and *O*swald — the 'Z' may stand for 'zebra' — engage in liberating animals and time-lapse photography of putrefying apples, prawns and larger dead fauna. They end up in a suicide pact, corpses covered in snails, not a second too soon. Pointless puns and verbal by-play — Bewick, Van Meegeren as vet keen to amputate her second leg, his mistress Catarina Bolnes, copious other visual references to Vermeer — quite punctuate if not puncture this unwarrantably confident folly. ▷

Recommended viewing

A regular selection by our critic from films still doing the rounds

Dim Sum Hong Kong-born Wayne Wang's appealing mosaic portrait (with visual bows to Japanese master Ozu) of Chinese family in freshly observed San Francisco: widowed mother, unmarried daughter, cheery uncle. Touching, humorous, astringent, a young director's invitation to 'only connect'.

Prizzi's Honour With genial fidelity to Richard Condon's triple-cross comedy of mafioso manners, veteran John Huston keeps it in *his* 'family' as daughter Anjelica pops wickedly up to net Jack Nicholson's bemused killer, love-torn Charley, from a killing new wife (Kathleen Turner).

My Beautiful Laundrette Low-budget, high-jinking mix of racism, gay love and Thatcherite ethics in today's Britain. Hanif Kureishi wittily scripts and Stephen Frears warmly directs ironic, tangled tale of South London Pakistani lad and ex-NF boyfriend managing title business for Saeed Jaffrey's superb, rascally rich uncle.

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Animals are freed to more purpose in John Irvin's appealing **Turtle Diary**, based — at a Pinterish remove — on the Russell Hoban novel about two repressed Londoners who nervously carry out a plan, with a friendly keeper's connivance, to liberate three turtles from the London Zoo aquarium into the sea off Devon. Worst when the words are most Pinter-enigmatic, it picks up nice life from Glenda Jackson as a children's book writer written-out, Ben Kingsley as the chance-met bookshop accomplice and Michael Gambon as the keeper.

Spielberg's executive shadow falls over Robert Zemeckis's **Back to the Future**, a further spasm of Stateside nostalgia, in which a time-machine car transports a high-school senior back to 1955, its funny old steam-TV and pop music, and the Oedipal problem of his mother-to-be's girlish lust for him. It's out-grossed *Rambo* in the US and may safely be called preferable. **Pumping Iron II — The Women** is a very funny and question-raising documentary that gets wonderfully behind the scenes of competitive female body-building. Is nothing sacred?

FILMS: 2

Spoilt for choice

Judith Williamson

A confusion of cultural and political intentions is turning the London Film Festival into a Celluloid supermarket

OVER THE LAST two and a half weeks of November, nearly 200 films have been screened, often simultaneously, at ten different London cinemas. They come from all over the world and range from Hollywood extravaganzas backed by big studios to a campaigning, low-budget documentary about the homeless in Bombay. They are linked by appearing in order of playdate in one leaflet and in alphabetical order in a souvenir brochure. The one feature they have in common is that none has previously been shown in England. The name of the phenomenon is the 29th London Film Festival.

The LFF has been steadily growing since it started with 15 films in 1957. It was originally intended to be a 'festival of festivals', bringing Londoners the pick of Cannes, Berlin, etc., plus a selection of other 'outstanding' films. Since its basic source was the year's previous festivals, an eclectic outlook was built into the event from the start and this year's biggest-ever, widest-ranging programme can be seen as the logical product of the festival's conception. In the Fifties and Sixties the festival's eclecticism posed few problems, as it had a coherent constituency in the blossoming Art House circuit; the film culture from which both films and audiences were drawn shared, on the whole, the selectors' criteria of excellence — which could therefore remain implicit.

Since then, the film culture in this country has grown in different directions, both of which pose some kind of challenge to the 'Art' ideology of the New Wave period. On the one hand there is an increasingly politicised independent sector, consisting of film workshops and small production groups often working within the Channel 4 orbit. On the other there is the 'bums on seats' brigade, concerned at the decline in British cinemagoing and aiming to make good entertainment movies that will entice the masses back to the cinema. It is this group that most people have in mind when they talk about the re-birth of British Cinema — *Chariots of Fire*, etc. — and which is dominant partly because of its higher profile, with celebrity figureheads like David Puttnam, but partly because the first group is afraid to contest its populism. If the idea of 'Art' cinema is now embarrassing, 'entertainment' seems a more democratic replacement.

These issues are crucial to the LFF and the directions it is taking, for a film festival is defined not only by its content but its context. Some popular critics employ a provocatively them-and-us rhetoric: Barry Norman in *Film 85* asserts triumphantly that the LFF is no longer just for 'intellectual film buffs in turtle-necked sweaters and beards — and that's just the women, ha ha'.

Guardian film critic Derek Malcolm, directing the festival this and last year, has dealt with these conflicting positions in classic liberal fashion — by including something for everybody. His commitment to Third World Cinema is evident and he has made a strong selection of films from Asia, Africa and Latin America. He has boldly included programmes of Scratch Video. But these are all jumbled up with films like *The Goonies*, whose purpose in the festival is unclear. The lack of any structuring device (other than the alphabet) means that this Spielberg Christmas cracker is oddly juxtaposed, in the souvenir programme, with *Half Life*, a documentary about the ravages of nuclear testing in the Pacific. This pseudo-democratic equivalence of all films negates their enormously different production contexts and purposes — and politics. The arrangement of actual screenings seems equally arbitrary, and discussions are not used to draw out thematic links. In the attempt to make all things equal, even the brochure's comments are reduced often to the lowest common denominator: do we really need to know whether Jamie Lee Curtis takes her clothes off in a film? The idea that everything is appealing in its way combines a humanist idea that all films are basically worthwhile with the familiar ideology of consumerism, where a wide choice is seen to guarantee both democracy and commercial success. The sensation produced by the festival and its publicity is that of being in a giant supermarket, where everything is different but of equal value, and you are under pressure to exercise choice, without quite knowing what you are choosing between.

Paradoxically, the real consumers in the past were the distributors, who came to the festival to buy; today, many films already have distributors, who merely use the festival as a convenient launching pad, turning it into a sort of giant preview/promo session. Much is made of the fact that distributors provide festival screenings free, but in return they are assured of an enormous amount of free publicity and, not insignificantly, the extreme unlikelihood of a *Guardian* pan when their films open. The extent and variety of the festival is meant to provide us with freedom of choice; yet it is a pluralism designed more for plugs than for making sense of the year's 'best' movies.

MUSIC

In from the cold

Andrew Clements

Not just a load of old dogma, the music of Hans Werner Henze, in a season on Radio 3, has shaken critical assumptions

THE BBC'S MUSIC Department sometimes performs its wonders in mysterious ways. Over the last few weeks, entirely unannounced, Radio 3 has been running what amounts to a usefully comprehensive survey of the recent music of Henze, based largely upon a series of recordings from last September's International New Music Week at Southampton University, in which he was one of the featured composers, and reinforced by tapes from foreign radio stations of the premiere, a year ago, of his Seventh Symphony in Berlin and Henze's 'freely refashioned' version of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* from this summer's Salzburg Festival. Not very long ago such concentrated exposure would have done no more than remind us of Henze's fall from grace, underlining how one of the most naturally gifted of all composers of the last 40 years had buried that talent under extraneous dogma and sheer self-indulgence.

The beginning of that falling-off can be pinned down to the late 1960s and is often attributed directly to Henze's conversion to Marxism and to his desire to put his music where his beliefs were. But the destructive elements in his music were already present in his opera *The Bassarids*, completed in 1964, and some of the 'committed' works are as finely crafted and poetic as anything written earlier. The musical language of *El Cimarrón* (1969), 'a recital for four musicians' based upon Estaban Montejo's *Biography of a Runaway Slave*, may be more astringent than the basically lyrical style of Henze in the 1950s and early '60s, and may call for ultra-expressionist techniques, but its coherence and dramatic effectiveness are never in doubt. Where Henze's later output can be criticised is for the unevenness that has come more and more to characterise it, so that exquisite, imaginative scores may be followed by music that creates no sense of organic structure whatsoever.

Until very recently, it seemed as if the ill-considered and incoherent were coming to predominate. For British audiences Henze's reputation has never recovered from the premiere of *We come to the river*, to a text by Edward Bond, at Covent Garden in 1976. A representative work from that phase in his development was included in the Southampton broadcasts: *Tristan*, subtitled 'Preludes' for piano, orchestra and tape from 1974 is by no means the worst example, and at times creates a

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powerful atmosphere, but too much of the writing lacks any credible self-discipline.

The new work from Southampton was a sequence of settings for mixed chorus of poems by Edward Bond, *Orpheus behind the Wire*, and I confess I did not approach it with any great enthusiasm. It grew out of a collaboration between the composer and playwright on an Orpheus ballet in 1979, in the wake of which Bond wrote the poems. But it proved to be as gravely beautiful as anything Henze has written in the last two decades. His musical language is now pared down to a mode of expression that lacks stridency or aggressiveness; the demands made upon the singers are severe but always entirely musical.

And just to demonstrate that this was not the one Henze work in every dozen that comes off, but perhaps signalled a genuine recovery of his musical self, along came both the symphony and the Monteverdi reworking. His version of *Ulisse*, with its highly seasoned scoring, goes over the top in just the right kind of joyous, magical way, while the symphony conjures up a congested sound world that is very different from the expressive limpidity of the Bond songs but is still most impressive, with a sombre balefulness that occasionally gives way to kernels of lyricism made the more effective by their rarity and concentration. With the new romanticism that is coming to dominate German music, Henze seems less the outsider and more its reluctant standard bearer. At one time Stockhausen and, Henze were the opposite poles of their art and it was easy to choose sides. Nowadays I'm not so sure. □

DANCE

New directions

Stephanie Jordan

As Dance Umbrella '85 folds up, three productions illustrate its value

'I NO LONGER want to do modern dance . . . I prefer ballet.' Thus spake American Karole Armitage at one of Dance Umbrella '85's Meet the Choreographer sessions.

This was the reaffirmation of Armitage's pre-Cunningham priorities and makes hers an extraordinary and brilliant contribution to the Umbrella programmes. **The Watteau Duet** demonstrates that she is an apt prima ballerina for our times, a charismatic, violent, forceful woman, able to challenge the power of David Linton's vicious, driving drum and tape score, with its martial dotted rhythms and *collages*. In a series of duets with her foil-partner Joseph Lennon, Armitage quotes and distorts moments from the classics and, without a whiff of parody, makes love that is innocent, courtly, erotic or explicit; she blends accomplished *pointe* with stiletto-heeled or jazz shoe-work in Charles Atlas costumes ranging from Balmain to punk oddity. Armitage's uncomfortably loud music deadens her dance rhythms. Nonetheless, her understanding of the variety of physical possibility in ballet language, its leg power and *presto* potential ensures that the event is deeply impressive.

Everything *but* ballet is in **An Axe to Grind**, Laurie Booth's collaboration with Dutch musician Harry de Wit. From spoken or projected words, Booth tries to rationalise his creativity, depicting the artist alone, idly stocktaking his life, building fantasies on his environment, seeking flight, finding himself before an audience at the Almeida, still alone. This ellipse shapes the piece, which opens and closes quietly but whose centre bursts with movement, noise and ideas. Through the improvised action, you seem to be involved in the unfolding of Booth's experience; he even shows that old videotape of the tarantula crawling on him. De Wit's body and the theatre are wired up for sound. The main prop, a bed, swings and upends as in a nightmare. Booth runs through a gamut of movement in each set piece, the dance amplifying the message, the music creating climaxes impossible in dance alone. The details are more distinct, the whole richer in language and theatricality than Booth's previous work.

For **Flying Lines**, Rosemary Butcher has the assistance of Michael Nyman, whose predominantly tri-chordal piano score matches the broad shape of her dance and Peter Noble's kite-like structures. Seeking to show 'the tension between things grounded and things being flown', Butcher offers first a duet, sometimes floorbound, sometimes spreading from a root in one corner, then a solo in silence for herself, investigating the ground, pushing back the

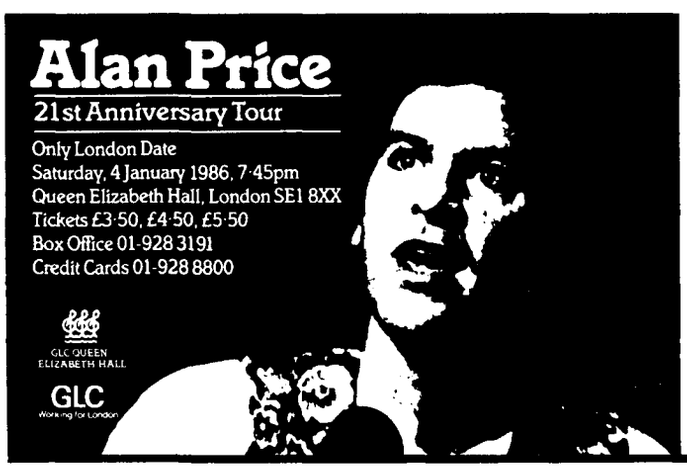
BILLBOARD

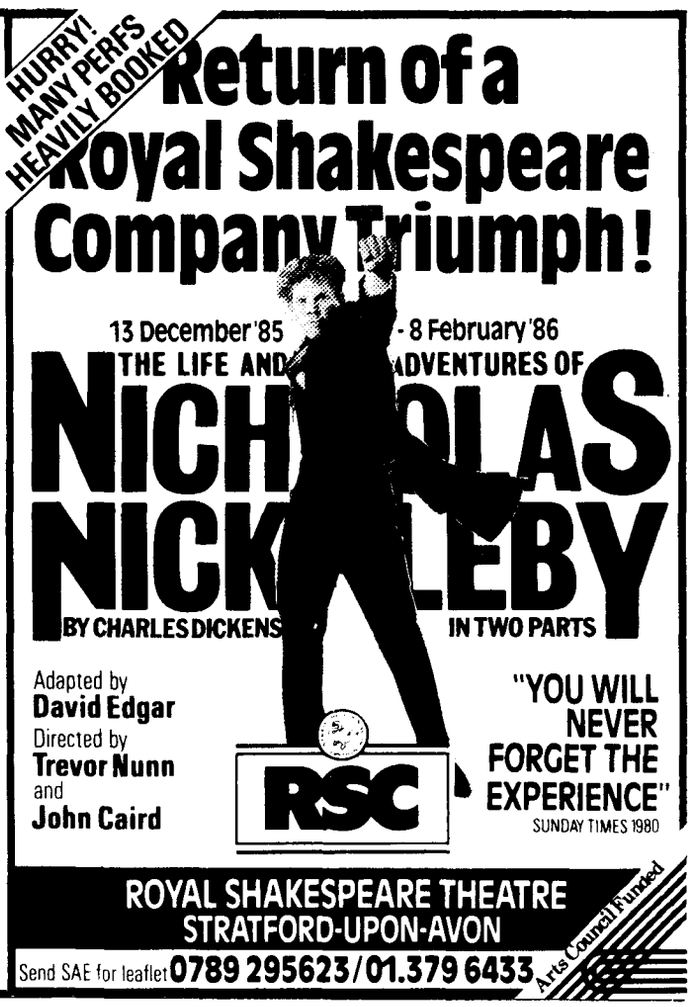
ROYAL SHAKESPEARE COMPANY 01-628 8795/638 8891. 24hr info 628 2295. **BARBICAN THEATRE** from 12 Dec. AS YOU LIKE IT *'An evening to delight the heart'* D.Tel. **THE PIT** from 11 Dec. MELONS a new play by Bernard Pomerance – author of 'The Elephant Man'. Set in New Mexico at the turn of the century 'Melons' portrays the dramatic meeting between two old adversaries from the Apache wars. Cast: David Burke, John Cater, Susan Colverd, Ben Kingsley, Anton Lesser. Director: Alison Sutcliffe.

NATIONAL THEATRE 01-928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'Pravda – A Fleet Street Comedy', 'A Chorus of Disapproval', 'Yonadab'. Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'Animal Farm', 'Love For Love', Mrs Warren's Profession'. Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'The Cherry Orchard'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 01-928 2256.

BLOOMSBURY THEATRE 01-387 9629 13 and 14 Dec. 7.30pm **INCANTATION** TRADITIONAL MUSIC OF SOUTH AMERICAN INDIANS. 16 Dec-4 Jan 8pm **HARVEY AND THE WALLBANGERS** in **PARK THE TIGER.**

HALF MOON THEATRE 213 Mile End Road, London E1. 01-790 4000. **RA-RA ZOO** ends Sat. from 12 Dec, by popular demand. **'Dracula'** by Chris Bond *returns* eves 7.30pm Sat 13 Dec at 7pm.





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surrounding space, opening to the overhead kites. The final ensemble is celebratory, with running in lines and circles, forwards and backwards, the flying image at last released under glowing lighting. Less effective as it winds on and on, the work indicates a refreshing warmth and speed in the Butcher repertory.

For me, these three events were the most impressive of the last weeks of the Umbrella, the events that commanded real attention at the weary end of a long festival. They also provided occasion to reflect upon how each artist has developed and enriched her/his resources over the years and upon the importance of the annual Umbrella in marking for us the stages of such development. □

THEATRE

Acts of grace

Benedict Nightingale

Interpreters
RONALD HARWOOD *Queens*
Vassa
GORKY *Greenwich*

MUCH MAY BE in short supply in our theatre — good, bold, new plays, for instance, and good, bold, young directors, for another instance — but there's one human commodity that seems irrepressible. No sooner does Vanessa Redgrave bow out of *The Seagull*, and Glenda Jackson begin to clear out her dressing-room in readiness for the end of *Phèdre*, than in come Maggie Smith and Janet Suzman, each more luminous than the offering in which she appears.

Interpreters isn't quite what it could and should have been. After all, consider the situation. Representatives of the UK and USSR meet to prepare a meeting between the PM and the Party Chairman, wrangling over such hifaluting matters as whether the tipple at a state banquet should be vodka, which the Russians think exorbitantly proletarian, or Chateau Margaux, which the FO thinks too dear. To the right of the British negotiator is Maggie Smith; to the left of his Soviet counterpart, Edward Fox. Within minutes of the meeting breaking up in diplomatic confusion it's evident that their connection is more than professional. A torrid clinch is followed by sex beneath the bathroom shower and interpreter Viktor's vow to defect for love of interpreter Nadia.

But the play's title is slyer than it seems, if not perhaps as subtle as author Harwood hopes. Reality is elusive, truth is hard to translate, the wariest of interpreters can err; and, in practice, this turns out to mean that Viktor is a liar and swinish lothario. He admits as much in the play's most striking scene, the one in which he explains to his hatchet-faced boss that the plan to defect was only a seducer's ruse, while Nadia translates his abject confession to an equally unsmiling English apparatchik. It's an excellent idea, but, like much else in the play, has faltered somewhere between Harwood's imagination and that tough testing-ground, the stage.

Partly, the blame belongs to Peter Yates's direction, which has already managed to botch a potentially hilarious scene, one in which Nadia plays footsie with Viktor beneath the table while mistranslating the Soviet side's continued hostility to vodka as whimsical enthusiasm. Partly, it's the fault of Fox, perhaps the most spectacular victim of miscasting since the Greek king Pentheus disguised himself in Bacchic drag, was instantly recognised by his fellow-revellers and ended up torn to pieces. I'm not (let me add) suggesting that we theatregoers should wreak any such vengeance on the poor fellow; but we are, I think, entitled to question the sanity of those who saw him as either a tawdry lecher or an exotic Russkie, let alone both at once. As it is, the voice of the grousemoors keeps hijacking his Red Square English; there's something irreducibly tweedy about his Dostoevskyan invocations of ecstasy and despair; and, when he leaps at Smith with a Cossack cry of 'let me ravish you', it's impossible to believe she'd be charmed, flattered or anything but appalled.

But the trouble must also be that Harwood's muse, humane and sensitive and intelligent though it is, has failed to extract all the pain and sour, dark humour to be found in the situation. That may sound paradoxical, given the achievement of Maggie Smith. There she is, the self-styled 'old maid of Whitehall', forced to tell a grim bureaucrat that the man who restored her emotional circulation is now saying 'all I wanted to do was screw her' and 'it's laughable to defect simply to seduce a woman'. Smith gives us the fragility of the character, the bleakness of her predicament, not without those touches of wan self-mockery at which she's uniquely adept; and it's marvellous, as far as it goes. But wouldn't still more have been delivered if more had been asked? Is the play rich enough for so ample a talent? There I have to admit my doubts.

Those doubts nagged again at Gorky's **Vassa**, on roughly the same subject as his *Enemies* but without its freshness and variety and munificence of spirit. It's too obvious — how could it not be, with a character specially introduced to intone such lines as 'reality is changing, a new force is emerging and it will crush you'? — that the capitalist family Zheleznov is expiring from that very prevalent early 20th-century Russian disease: chronic archaism, exacerbated by internal discord and other such symptoms of exploiter's syndrome. Yet the play still permits Janet Suzman to give as relentlessly unsentimental performance as I've seen on a British stage.

She's Vassa Zheleznova, owner of a steamship company and a woman who spends the evening sacking workers, bribing officials, encouraging her unsatisfactory husband to kill himself, stealing her grandson from her radical daughter-in-law and then arranging her arrest by the secret police. Right up to her death, which occurs with a snarl, a cough and a long, horrible stare, her harsh and baleful charisma doesn't lessen; and yet she makes you feel, still without a touch of sentiment, that the most damaged of her victims is herself. She's sat, spat, shat on what was best in her, she's consciously corroded her heart and mind, she's abandoned herself to an emotional limbo the wrong side of despair and, somehow, she knows it. Disappointing play; extraordinary playing. □

Naseem Khan

No more Shhh!

MOST PEOPLE will know that deep sense of unease generated by a public library. The way one's footsteps appear to echo horrendously, the muted whispers and rustles, the almost furtive finding of a book and taking it out via a surreptitious, spylike exchange of little cards.

People who were in Sheffield recently for a conference designed to put arts administrators and library workers in touch with each other, will know that this is a view of the past. The library — bastion of silence and sobriety — is under attack: indeed, in some places has capitulated entirely. What form the new provision will take, for whom and run by whom was the subject of keen debate.

On the face of it, it might seem a parochial debate and libraries — solid and unglamorous — a poor prize to fight for. But, in fact, their very anonymity is their greatest asset. Sited in the midst of communities around the country, they have never got identified with one or another interest group, achieving an unusual combination of neutrality and respect. They are surprisingly well used, too: 35 per cent of the population are library users, and the figure rises to 50 per cent when people who go into libraries in search of general information are included. More people go through their doors, said Pat Coleman, Sheffield's Director of Libraries and Information, than into any other public building, and a greater cross-section than is involved with social services or housing. There's another unrecognised bonus: a number of libraries, built in expansive turn-of-the-century days, have unused space: reading rooms, meeting rooms. Their potential for developing the traditional activities of libraries is far-reaching.

Add up all the ideas in the air and this is what you could find when you step into a library: a busy place, a focus for community activity. There are books, certainly, and tapes and records, but videos too and the opportunity to watch videos and to borrow the equipment to make your own. There are writers' workshops and maybe a writer in residence; classes in all manner of things, from English to embroidery; a retail outlet for the products of independent community publishers. There's a darkroom and exhibition space, equipment to photocopy, collate and bind local writers' work and records of local history. And there's a loan service that will lend you anything from crockery to a dance floor to a couple of unicycles.

None of these is an invented idea. All exist here and there in libraries around Britain and speak for an entirely new kind of relationship between library and users. Patrick Conway, Gateshead's Borough Librarian, for instance, began his talk on Libraries and Community Arts with a tape made by the library — not rustles and hisses, but

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rock music produced by the Gateshead Music Collective.

The original members had been a bunch of lads branded as failures and troublemakers and expelled from just about everything possible. All they were interested in was music, but nobody would give them a place to practise till the libraries service took them on. Today — five years on — the Collective has developed into a springboard for other arts forms (murals, animation, painting) backed up by the libraries. It includes a shifting membership of 200 to 300 youngsters.

THE PROSPECT of promoting a rock group would not be welcomed by the majority of librarians, nor indeed do most have the skills to do that. The need to bridge the gap between community arts and libraries was behind Sheffield's own radical reorganisation some 18 months ago. The city's 38 libraries were grouped into 18 administrative units each headed by a Community Librarian. Working with them are the library services' two Community Arts workers and a Media Unit run by one coordinator and large numbers of volunteers.

A comparatively flexible structure for local government, it allows libraries to think about the other 50 per cent that don't come through their doors (like the kids who formed Gateshead Music Collective). It has, even in the short time it's been running, gone a long way towards proving its point. The Media Unit has been inundated with requests from local groups for back-up in making videos: 500 requests in the last year, from adult education to graffiti artists and breakdancers. The bits of tapes that I saw were of an impressively high standard, using a range of techniques from scratch to animation. A young black writers' workshop produced an anthology of its work — launched in a delightfully cheery evening, with readings and a visual arts exhibition in a library, two months ago. A mural is under way in another library.

However, it would be disingenuous to think that this all comes about with no trouble. The worlds of artists and librarians do not always mix well, as is reflected in the relative muscle power in local authority terms. In Sheffield, for instance, the arts department has 30 employees. Libraries have 600. The arts budget is just over one million pounds. Libraries' budget exceeds six million. The library service is a statutory duty; the arts exist by hope and generosity.

Besides all of this, at its most simplistic, different types of people gravitate to different jobs. How practicable was it, it was asked at Sheffield, to ask librarians to work videos, book in a Christmas panto (Camden), organise a community opera (Glamorgan), lend out unicycles (Sheffield)? They are not skills that are covered in traditional library training. And then, just practicable is it to mix activities? A music group in a library would clash with people who simply wanted to read books. And where should the balance be — with community arts or arts in the community?

The Sheffield conference contented itself, sensibly, with broadening the base of knowledge. It called, primarily, for in-service training and links with regional arts associations that could help to accumulate skills. It is no good having a vision of a new Jerusalem if there aren't the builders to make it work. □

Christine Roche

Compulsory enlistment

Bill Greenwell

IT'S A QUARTER past seven, evening, the toddler has just been conned into calling it a night, and the phone rings.

Ring, ring, who the hell is that at this time of the night, evening, what do they want, I'm knackered, you answer it, all right, Hello.

'Mr Greenwell?'

Not the wrong number then, sounds official, assume pleasant tone, not many who call you Mister these days, Yes it is.

'Mr Greenwell?'

Must get out of the habit of thinking my answers, if Alexander Graham Bell had invented telepathy, wouldn't be holding a receiver in my hand.

'Yes, hello?'

'Mr Greenwell, I'm ringing on behalf of (*unintelligible*), I wonder could I ask you when you last had your exterior walls rendered. You see . . . '

Indeed I do. I am being tapped for cash, it is 7.15 p.m., I am frazzled, who put them on to me, who spotted the fact that the front of our house needs more than a quick spit and polish, switch to automatic pilot:

'Had the house done six months ago, in fact.'

Complete fib, not what she's got on her file, bet that's thrown her, yes, yes, she's switching to Tack Two, aha —

'Well, the reason I'm calling you is that our company offers a complete range of—'

Too late. I've lied my way past her. I let the burble play itself out on the other end of the line, and return to my own close.

'I'm sure. But as we've just had the front — and back' (whoops, nearly forgot that loophole!) 'done a few months ago, I hardly think —'

End of the chat. She has gone away to clip some minion round the ear (I-thought-you-said-number-fifteen-was-a-wreck sort of thing), and I can get on with making a speedy recovery from daily grinds, binds, etc. etc. But isn't it amazing that they call like this? Is there really custom to be cornered at 7.15 in the evening, be it for life insurance, aluminium double-glazing or self-erect kennels? I suppose there must be, unless the sales brigade is getting commission on calls, which I doubt.

And how do they know my name is Greenwell? It's not the phone-book since the boffins at British Telecom managed to miss me out of that. It must be our old friend, The Electoral Register, unless I have been shopped by the A.A. or my name sold on some other capacious computer print-out to Unintelligible and Co.

There are lots of these lists, as we all know. Dear MR GREENWELL, *You* have been Personally Selected . . . and so on. Those ones, with their dinky YES and NO envelopes and their foxy instructions, are as familiar on the front-mat as the daily chink of the milkman. But there are several other Lists and it seems to me that they have been proliferating since the dark day, some time in 1977, when my Mini was forced off a motorway by an outsize Police Van. STOP, it said in red, so I did.

He got out of his van, the smirk still sidling up his face. I had begun the cumbersome process of

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winding the window down (the handle had come off, how the hell had he spotted it?). He poked his nose through the limited space on offer, peaked cap gleaming, armbands a blaze of orange.

'Mr Greenwell?'

I did a triple-take which left a crick in my neck. When a member of HM mobile constabulary has your moniker between his teeth, you naturally suspect the worst. If he was so sure of my surname, what other dark little secrets had he stashed about his person?

'Yes . . . '

'Of 48 Pennsylvania Road, Exeter?'

'No, 32.'

'Quite right! Just checking.'

By this time, I had salvaged some of my occasional composure and studied him more closely. He was not Eamonn Andrews. I had ascertained. Now he lobbed in a teaser.

'Would you like to know your chassis-number?'

Now this is a really curly one. Which of us can honestly take our hearts from our sleeves, place our hands upon them and not answer, in extreme unction and even urgency, that, Yes, Yes, we have waited all our lives for a policeman to divulge the several digits comprising the individual, personal number of our chassis?

'Because,' he continued, 'I can go and look it up. It's all on the computer.'

'What have I done?' I cried, fearful lest, in the white heat of his technological fervour, he had forgotten to caution me, prior to arrest.

'Oh, nothing. Mind you, young man in a Mini — very suspicious.'

And off he trolled to his van, as pleased (if I may say so) as Punch. He had just detained me to test his new toy. And now they've all got them, and they can ring you at any hour of the day and night, including 7.15, and start insidious chats, flog you electric duvets, parrots, the latest piece of pesticidal armoury and anything they want.

Which is why I want a Freedom of Information Act. Now. Not tomorrow, not next session, not when Buggins of Bognor comes up on the Private Members lottery, but Now. And it's not so that I can check my files. Far from it. I have no desire to go crawling through card-indexes. I want to be able to ring up all these berks, immediately after they've phoned me, at the drop of a hat, flick of a switch, and ask them impertinent questions, first names, no messing, and I will *keep* ringing, until they decide, in their limited wisdom, to leave me alone. □

WHAT DO YOU READ?

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TELEVISION

Hugo Williams
Fuming

TV EATS BAD NEWS for dinner, smacking its chops and trying to keep a straight face. All over the country individuals start to giggle as they reach for the tomato sauce. The law of supply and demand groans under the strain and coughs up another virgin.

Did we get to see the 3ft-long ceremonial sword that Terence Pocock used to run through the two 13-year-old schoolgirls? I missed that. The inquest on the murder of Jasmine Beckford, three, by her father, came to the conclusion that her death had been predictable and preventable. Four separate government departments could have saved her: Health, Education, Social Services and the Law Courts. But they'd seen it all before. Maria was beaten to death by her parents, Charlene was shut in a drawer, Heidi was starved, Tyra was bitten.

One year after Bhopal, an entire childhood has vanished from a community once dependent on American capital, now out of work with suppurating eyes. Union Carbide accept 'moral' but not 'legal' responsibility for their callousness and slave-owner mentality. Anyway, in England children have taken up smoking at last — and can you blame them? A quarter of the population under 16 now smokes. 'There aren't any ads on TV,' we are told, yet, apparently, seven out of ten children think there are. Surely they're imagining all that subtle-yet-ostentatious sponsorship of lung-busting activities like cricket, tennis, running, you-name-it? Confusing black and gold exhaust fumes with tobacco smoke or something? They aren't?

Monday, Stormy Monday, the day our best poet, Philip Larkin, died of cancer of the throat at 63, has got to go down in history as the gloomiest night on television, or anywhere else, for a long time. If it was the warmest day in December for 50 years, that was the devil warming his hands on all the bad news he'd stoked up for us. The wife-beating programme on **Open Space** (BBC2) was called *Sorry Love, It's Domestic* after the apology Police offer bleeding in-home muggees foolish enough to lodge complaints with them. The problem looks intractable, being outside the criminal law for some reason. Why? Women daren't press charges against their loved ones for fear of having to share the gaols of their homes with them afterwards. 'What if they didn't take him away?' asked one woman, recalling her terror. 'He got three months,' said another, 'and I've been paying for it ever since.'

It seems judges are still willing to accept an anachronism called an 'undertaking' from husbands who throw their wives through plate-glass windows. It must be terribly reassuring for the wives to find that no power of arrest attaches to these assurances. Access to children is the problem. It was ironical that the stormy Monday which saw a switch of emphasis by the Social Services from the interests of the parents to the interests of the child, following the Inquest on little Jasmine, should also produce evidence on this programme that a child's rights (i.e. its father's rights to visit it) are also the father's right to beat up its mother. So long as a batterer has rights of entry, the woman can never get away.

A few weeks ago this same *Open Space* slot did an excellent programme on the gutter-press panic-mongering and sexploitation of AIDS, which reminded us of how the Irish were blamed for the cholera outbreak in New York in 1832 and suggested that certain newspapers should carry a government health warning. A whole anthology of prejudice and fear was brought up to date, with contributions from uglies Ingrams and Jameson and the repulsive George Gale. 'There is a general view in this country that "it" is not normal . . . these people flaunt themselves and attract obloquy.' George, your thinking smells.

Monday's AIDS programme on **Panorama** (BBC2), *The Race for a Cure,* did come up with a whisper of optimism on the subject. Thanks to massive public education, so far lacking in this country, there has been a decrease in new cases appearing in San Francisco, where, nevertheless, someone still dies every day of the disease. The programme interviewed various incredibly brave young men in this country, all sufferers, all trying not to give in to it by painting their rooms or offering themselves as guinea pigs to the eager scientists at the Pasteur Institute in Paris. Yes, that's right, there's a big inter-country rivalry between France and America to come up with a cure which will attract enormous commercial prizes. 'People put up objections to the independent research programmes on account of the possible side effects of the drugs,' said an Englishman who followed Rock Hudson's quest for a cure. 'I don't mind in the least dying of cancer in nine years time so long as I don't die of AIDS in two weeks.'

The programme had its grotesques, inevitably Californian. A self-love therapist with 200 AIDS patients gets them to talk direct to their T-cells in the mirror. 'I love my helper T-cells,' enthused a self-lover. 'They are very powerful and I thank them for working overtime and multiplying on my behalf . . .'

Monday wouldn't have been stormy Monday without the jolly **World In Action** (ITV) on the 'Crisis in Industrial Safety Policy'. It seems the government has found a shiny new Americanism to save (make) money with: deregulation; the unshouldering of responsibility for industrial safety into the eager hands of mangement, who then purchase as little or as much 'safety assurance' as they feel like. Since the sinister 'Costain Agreement', the number of sites and accidents has gone up. What else can I tell you? Next week: 'Adultery'. □

Evolution

Fiona Pitt-Kethley

'Some men are very wicked!' my Gran said
while looking at a monkey in the Zoo.
His spectacles of flesh and blue behind
reminded her of someone she once knew.

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Weekend competition

No 2902 **Set by Yvonne Bradbury**
Found in a recent full-colour brochure: an ad. for Othello beds. Compers are asked to provide equally cheery, enticing and suitable brand names for things saleable. Max. ten goes; by 19 December.

No 2899 **Set by Diana Eden**
Apparently respectful obits of fictitious people conveying how little they will be missed.

Report **By Len the Unlucky**
'Oozing admiration', we said, not patent contempt — and not about barely disguised real people, either. Because of *your* lack of subtlety, *I* got landed (appropriately, *She* said) with sacksfull of scathing accounts of boring old colonels in clubs going on about past triumphs and trivial hobbies, of ghastly practical jokers and interfering ladies-not-so-bountiful. I don't think any of you will ever get employment as obituarists but I've picked out a few entries which have something — anything — a bit different about them and earn their writers a tenner towards the Christmas overdraft.

Bishop Filbert was that rare being, a good man. Nor was his a selfish goodness, for he did not spare himself in his zeal that his friends and colleagues should be equally good. His readiness to pray — often in public places — for those less spiritually gifted bore witness to his compassion. The incident at the Royal Academy Banquet, after Lord Topman's unfortunate lapse, was one of many examples. Again, when he attempted to cast out devils from Sir Robin Day during a television interview in which the latter was heard to murmur 'Jesus wept', one could but admire his strength of purpose, even though he was unsuccessful on that occasion. The Archbishop of Canterbury said yesterday, 'The Church will not be the same without him.'

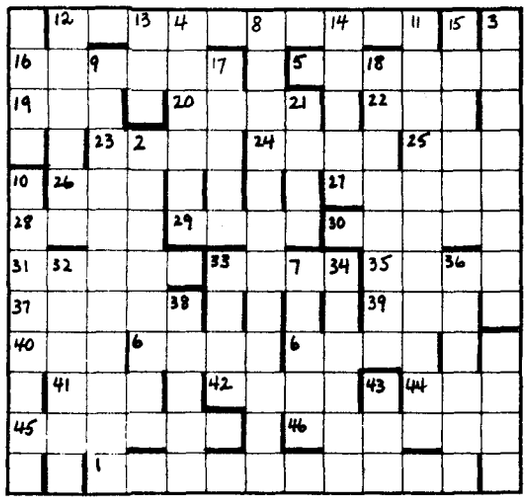
NOEL PETTY

Neighbours will miss Britain's oldest 'pop' buff, Ernie 'Yeah Yeah' Binstead, who collapsed and died during a celebrity concert on Tuesday evening. In his 97th year, Ernie had been afflicted by a steadily increasing deafness, an handicap he resisted by a corresponding raising of the decibel level given out by his hi-fi. This courageous fight against adversity evoked sympathy, tinged with an ambivalence varying in intensity directly proportionate to distance from Ernie's residence. Ernie's last hours were enriched by the performances of rock giants such as Elton John, Mick Jagger and Boy George. In the unavoidable absence of his favourite artiste, however, perhaps Ernie's epitaph should be 'O death where was thy Sting?'

CHAS. F. GARVEY

Salamanca 101
'From Storeman to 9'

PRIZES: £25 cheques for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 101, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 30 December*.



All clued Down answers are entered normally: each Across clue is normal but contains a misprint of one letter, the same misprint that must occur within the entered answer. Original versions of misprinted letters provide a useful help with the eleven unclued answers (some of which consist of more than one word) that have each lost a letter wherever it occurs, these letters spelling out in numbered order the link of which they are parts — probably never encountered in the order in which they are presented here! (The two parts of 6 should be taken together: one answer contains an abbreviation, and another possible full answer may be found between two of those already included). The two unnumbered grid entries can be completed to provide the true starting point.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

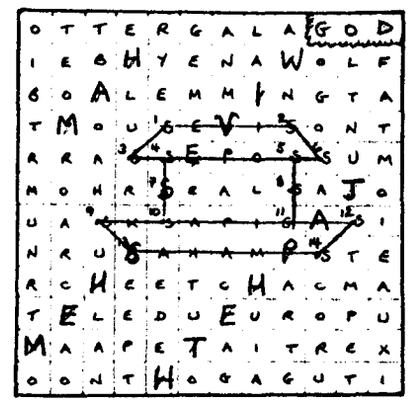
ACROSS

12. Given crown Prince has to spread round over a large distance mostly (one would have to do everything kingly for a while) (10)
16. Doc with name covering front of thesis (6)
19. No time to chat, coming round in the past (3)
20. Blunder: what the nosey do, putting the foot in it? (4)
22. Seeds that you get in heads: where sown live? (3)
23. A short boy for loading liquid in the old days (4)
24. One's probed into head to discover foreigner's sight (4)
25. Helve, the reverse of sturdy (3)
26. Plant Eire's leader presented to King Edward? (3)
27. Such talks are hot when surrounded by nigers etc. (5)
28. One coming round at beck of another for money abroad (4)
29. Name bird's sound, not short (4)
30. Mr T's not suable when run into once again (5)
31. This sign to repeat io in lively English song (5)
33. Cold wind carrying sickness: yon see one rising from the east? (4)
35. Bad bargain: given a round initial increase you'll get it (2 words, 4)
37. Splash, hint of sleet, and hols are cut (5)
39. Tavers found among flocks are the gauge of how successful one is (3)
40. Some (Irish?) butter ripple's not in (3)
41. Raving by no means properly called hard drama (3)
42. Saw head following rest go, no longer required? (To the car you would) (4)
44. Which one of the two's now perhaps not neats to order? (3)
45. An antique thing taken to a festival and given new price for this? (New type-reels pet's not needed) (6)
46. Over that wan old furious Queen? (6)

DOWN

12. Philistines having to repair MG engine, not old, failing (6)
13. Ladies in a service: they sing alternate parts? (3)
14. Some might say it's Scottish feast that's most sumptuous (5)
15. This described an old tree that could be tiny, eh? (6)
17. Tongue round the inside showing teeth marks? (5)
18. Although prevalent it's hardly down-to-earth (3 words, 8)
21. They're said in agreement during some ugly upsets (4)
32. To get a kite up you'ld need fairly high force wind, defying gravity? (6)
33. Certainly within the confines of extremes of poverty? (4)
34. Heads of colony want this kept around perhaps for its produce? (6)
36. According to the poet it's like a clinging leaf, one dead, gripping tree that's let go all from higher parts? (6)
38. Said upon discovery of hint of lettering in ring (5)
43. This organisation various countries do form (not so direct) (3)

Solution to Salamanca 100



Noah (no ah) is encountered in two across answers (tahr & cheetah). Down: 1 barm-turn-mooi. 2 mote-roar-ceas. 3 baba-hush-lant. 4 rusk-seep-teil. 5 ryes-sass-Eden. 6 meed-haut-toge. 7 vamp-pace-agen. 8 ilia-glim-huia. 9 soss-part-wang. 10 gogo-sans-cour. 11 nuts-temp-tolt. 12 omit-eaux-idea.

Prizewinners to Salamanca 100

Michael Clarke (Bracknell, Berks.)
D. A. Nicholls (Chester)
Margaret Richards (Basildon, Essex)

***Note: Salamanca will next appear in our Christmas double issue (20/27 December) but the solution to S101 will be published with Salamanca 103 on 3 January 1986.**

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Britain's fifth largest Trade Union, the National Union of Public Employees, with almost 700,000 members, is reconstituting its Full-Time Officer Panel, from which future appointments to Full-Time Officer posts will be made. Applications to be placed on the Panel are invited from Trade Union members with a proven record of activity, involvement and commitment to the Trades Union and Labour Movements. The Union would be particularly interested in receiving applications from women and ethnic minorities.

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NUPE is an equal opportunity employer. We encourage applications from women and men from all sections of the community irrespective of their sex, race, ethnic origin, colour, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, religion or age.

For further details and an application form, please send a postcard with your name and address on to Mr. Allan Taylor, National Organisation Officer, NUPE, 20 Grand Depot Road, Woolwich, London SE18 6SF.

The closing date for applications is **Wednesday 22 January 1986.**

BANKING, INSURANCE & FINANCE UNION

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

A temporary vacancy has arisen for a Research Assistant in the Research Department of the Banking, Insurance & Finance Union as a result of the present member of staff taking maternity leave. The work of the department is an essential part of the Union's service to its members and covers the wide range of matters relevant to their employment. Formal qualifications are not essential but proven ability, experience of trade union work and knowledge of industrial relations and particularly health and safety matters would be an advantage.

The position is based at the Union's headquarters in Wimbledon and would be for approximately six months' duration. Commencing salary is **£10,548 p.a.** and application forms can be obtained from the **Research Officer, BIFU, 17 Hillside, Wimbledon SW19 4NJ. Tel: 01-946 9151.** The closing date for receipt of completed application forms is: **31 December 1985.**

BIFU is an equal opportunities employer.

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The World Development Movement, Britain's main pressure group on Third World issues, which is supported by the major churches and development agencies, needs a new campaigns officer. She/He must have proven commitment to the work of voluntary development agencies.

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TRADES UNION ORGANISER

CND requires a full-time organiser to promote nuclear disarmament issues within the Trades Union movement. She/He should be familiar with both trades union and nuclear disarmament movements. Good writing and public speaking skills are essential. Experience in preparing materials for publication and organising events, campaigns and conferences is desirable.

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Application forms for this post can be obtained from:
The Administrative and Personnel Officer
The Labour Party
Walworth Road
London SE17 1JT
Tel. 01-703 1064
and SHOULD BE RETURNED BY NO LATER THAN TUESDAY, 17 DECEMBER 1985

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Ian L. Herd
Interim Chief Executive

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For further details, write to: **The Admissions Tutor, Women's Studies, Postgraduate School of Applied Social Studies, University of Bradford, West Yorkshire BD7 1DP.**

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ATTRACTIVE MALE medical researcher, PhD, 33, interests: natural history, classical music, theatre, travel seeks girl with warm personality for lasting relationship. London area preferred. Box (49)2024. N49.5

ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, 34, experiencing cultural and creative renaissance, seeks stimulating, companionable London male. True liking for women essential, lust necessary but insufficient. Box (49)2025. N49.4

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LIAISON IN LEICESTER? Male, 31, science graduate, interests from cars to philosophy, likes emancipated (not feminist) females, free for Christmas and most of 1986. Box (49)2012. N49.12

LONELY MALE, 32, shy and unattractive, seeks older lady for discreet relationship. Personality more important than looks. Interests: country walks, quiet evenings. Devon. Box (49)2009. N49.15

LONELY THIS CHRISTMAS? ME TOO! If you are female, 18-45, any nationality, and we like each other, let's link up and share cooking, parenting?, walks, dancing, staying in, hugs, warmth, gentleness, sensitivity, affection — and kiss, caress and make love. Hurry and write, with tel. no., and photo — to John (36)! London area. Box (49)2031 N49.1

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MALE, 40 unattached, philosphical, usually cheerful — always humorous; loves walking, talking, going out, travel; living Bristol; wishes to meet slim, sincere, interesting female to brighten up both our lives. Box (49)2030. N49.2

PENFRIENDS around the world. Concordia-International, Box 185, Snowdon, Montreal H3X 3T4, Canada N49.7

PROFESSIONAL MALE, 33, fair and slim, believes in kindness and Romance, seeks attractive woman/single mother, for friendship and sharing. Hampshire area. Box (48)1964. N49.21

SANTA BABY I'm an optimistic journalist lady (50s — looking rather nice 40s), warm personality, enjoying arts, outdoors, lazy weekends, and what I'd like in my Christmas stocking is an attractive, unattached, interesting rather than intellectual, non-smoking gentleman 60ish. Telephone appreciated. London/Surrey. Thanks Santa. Box (49)2022. N49.9

SENSITIVE, LOVING woman, 35, very tall, attractive, intellectually curious seeks warm, caring, unattached man, 30-45, for deep and lasting relationship. London area. Box (49)2014. N49.10

SENSITIVE, TALL, caring, unattached man, 55, likes people, music, walking, seeks intelligent, helpful n/s woman, mid forties. South Essex. Box (49)2011. N49.13

SINGLE MALE, 37, 170, seeks for skiing or windsurfing holidays (21.12 — 12.1), pretty woman for sport, conversation and (lasting?) relationship. Box (49)2006. N49.18

VERY PERSONAL, attractive, charming, educated lady, own home, seeks professional gentleman, for friendship/marriage in London area. Box (49)2010. N49.14

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MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Informal short talk & questions. 'The Great Master's Letter' 8 p.m. 8 Dec. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N49.31

ANNOUNCEMENT

PRO-SOVIET PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN. Anybody interested in joining or making a contribution to this party please write to: Pro-Soviet Party of Great Britain, 3 Thornyfield Road, Shirley, Birmingham B90 3HP. N49.40

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For issue dated **3 Jan 1986** copy must arrive by:
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Phone **01-251 5487** for early bookings.

Send ads to: **Advertisement Dept., New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.**

AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL DAVID JONES 01-251 5487

SAT 7 DEC

"A LUTA CONTINUA" — STUDY CONFERENCE. ANGOLA & MOZAMBIQUE. TEN YEARS ON: THE CONTINUING WAR. University of London Union, Malet St., W1. 9.30am–5.30pm £3/1.50 unwaged.

TUES 10 DEC

CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON LABOUR'S ARTS POLICY. Speaker: Norman Buchan, Shadow Spokesman on Arts, 8pm. Berkshire Shire Hall, Reading (off junction 11, M4). Organised by Berkshire & South Oxon Fabian Society.

7.30pm OLD TOWN HALL, CARLISLE, James Cutler (Yorkshire TV) will show his new film **'The British Bomb'.** Organised by Carlisle City Council, A NFZ.

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY Public Meeting on "Political Prisoners", 8pm. Essex Hall, Finchley Methodist Church, Essex Park, N3. Speakers: Geoff Bindman, member of International Commission of Jurists, recent observer at South African Treason Trials; Bob Hughes MP, National Chairperson of Anti-Apartheid.

SAT 14 DEC

BRIEFING ON PUBLIC ORDER BILL at Congress House. Starts 1.15pm. Speakers: Gareth Pierce and Jack Dromey (unconfirmed), followed by Discussion groups/advice/suggestion sessions. First showing of Public Order Policing exhibition (PORG). Organised by Public Order Research Group, SE Region TUC and Greater London Association of Trades Councils. For further information phone Cathie Lloyd 01-734 5831.

GREENHAM COMMON —WIDENING THE WEB. Decorate the Fence, exchange ideas, light up the base at dusk with candles, sparklers . . . coach details Janet Convery 01-250 4010.

SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARISM: A Threat to Economic Development in the Southern African Subcontinent. Day conference at The Africa Centre from 10am–6pm. £3/£1.50 unwaged. Info: 01-836 1973.

TUES 17 DEC

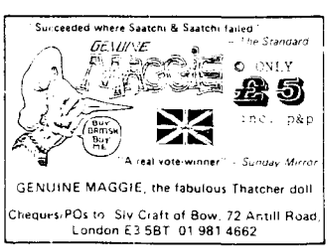
"HAS AID BEEN EFFECTIVE" a seminar chaired by HRH The Princess Anne, speaker Robert Cassen, is the first of six seminars organised by **SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND** highlighting the development problems facing African governments and identifying future priorities for assistance. 6–8pm. Admission £5 (one or more seminars).
Further information and booking from **Barbara Hewitt, The Save The Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD. Tel: 01-703 5400.**

WED 18 DEC

MARXISM TODAY CHRISTMAS CABARET FOR FOR THE ANC, With The Flying Pickets, Happy End, Pauline Melville, Blah!, Skint Video, Benjamin Zephaniah Band, The Electric Ballroom, Camden. Prompt start 7.30pm. £5/£3 unwaged. Reservations 01-608 0265.

WED 18 DEC-THURS 19 DEC

ANNUAL CONFERENCE of World University Service (UK) *'Adult Education: Empowering the People'.* Conference will explore the potential of adult education for developing alternatives for those marginalised by formal programmes. Discussion will focus on comparing British and South African experience. Venue: Reading University. Registration (including food and accommodation) £32.50. Details from WUS, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN (tel: 01-226 6747).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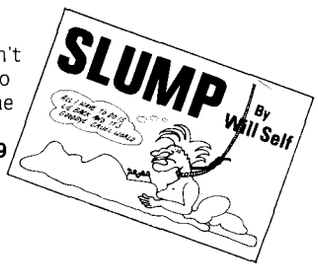

"SLUMP" by Will Self
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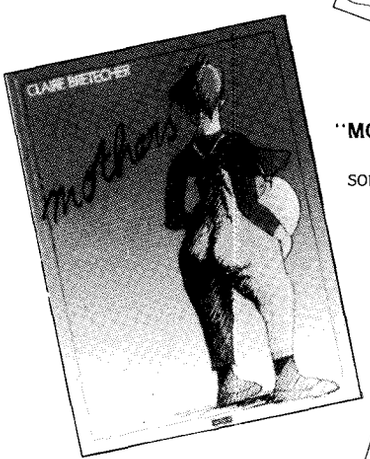

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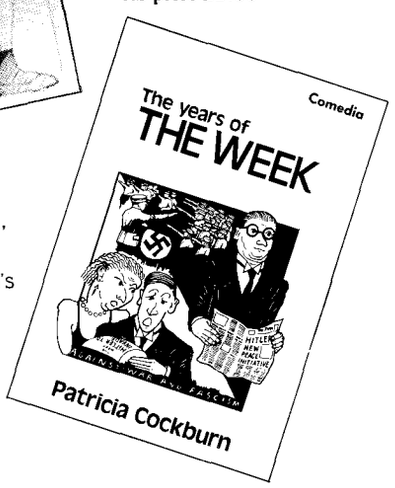

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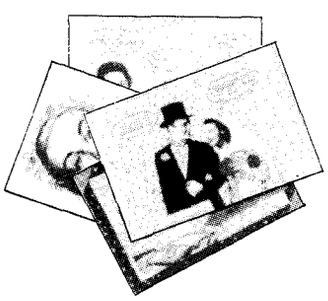

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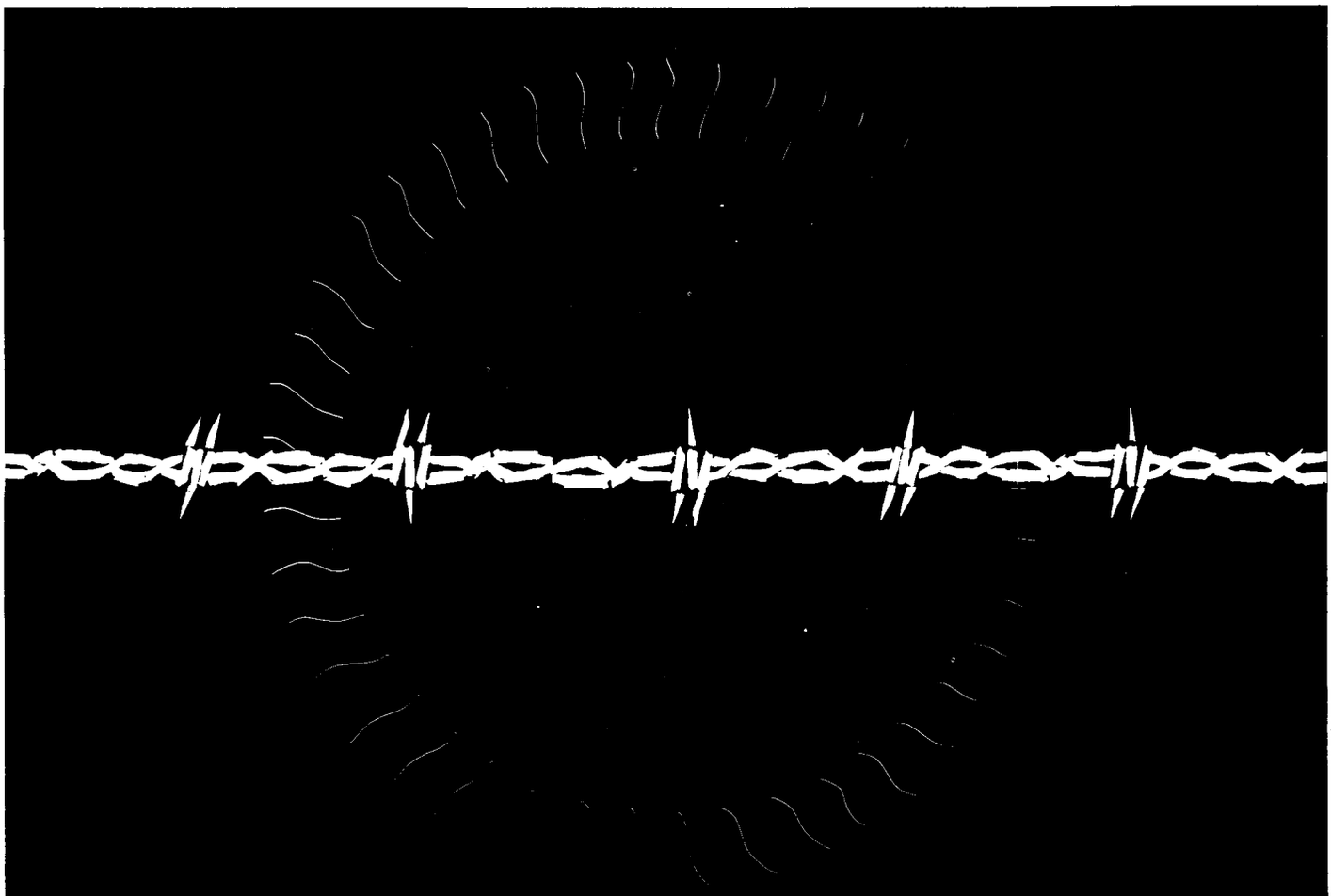

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